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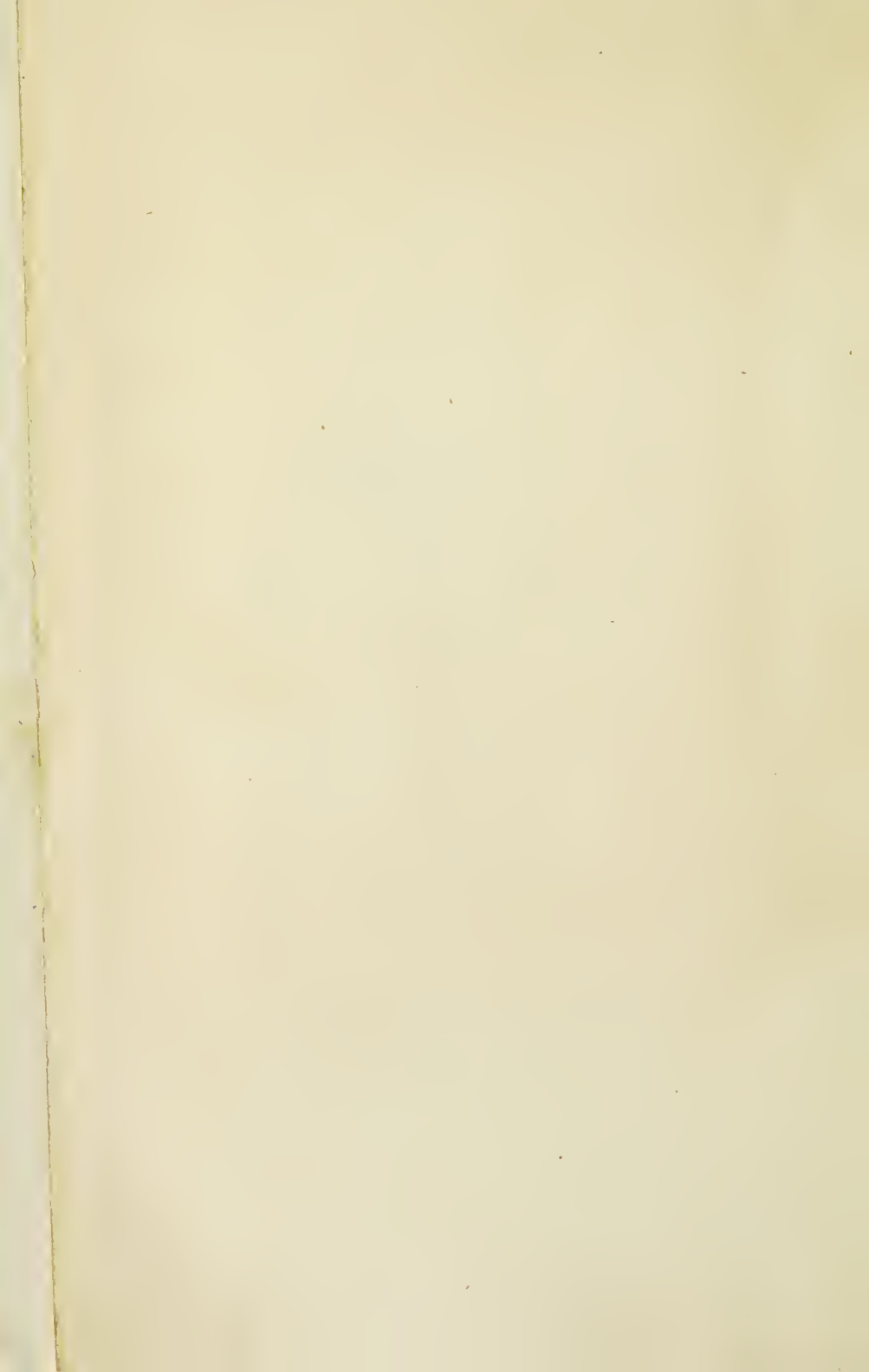


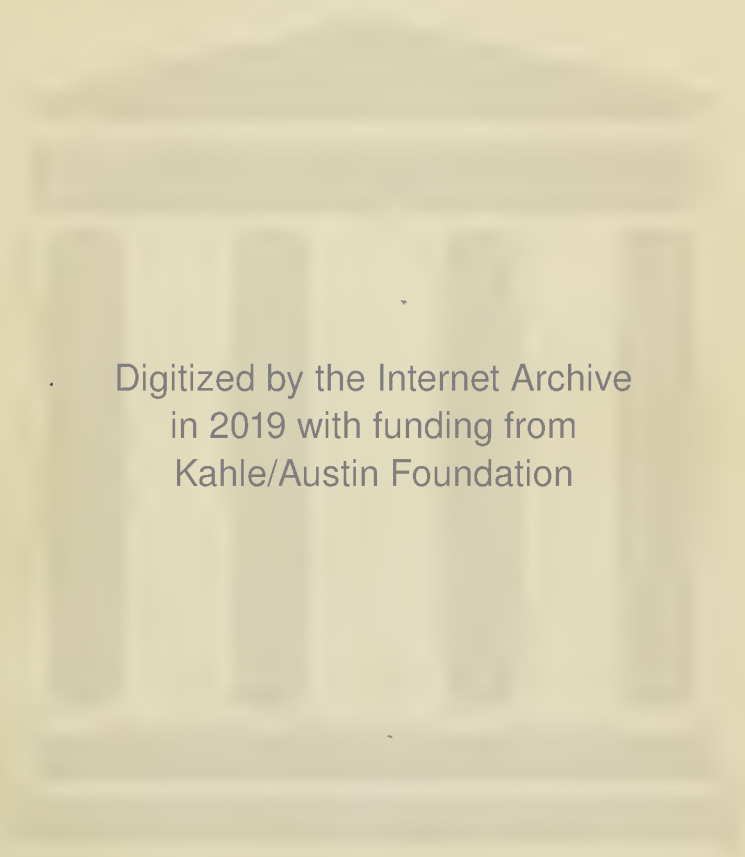
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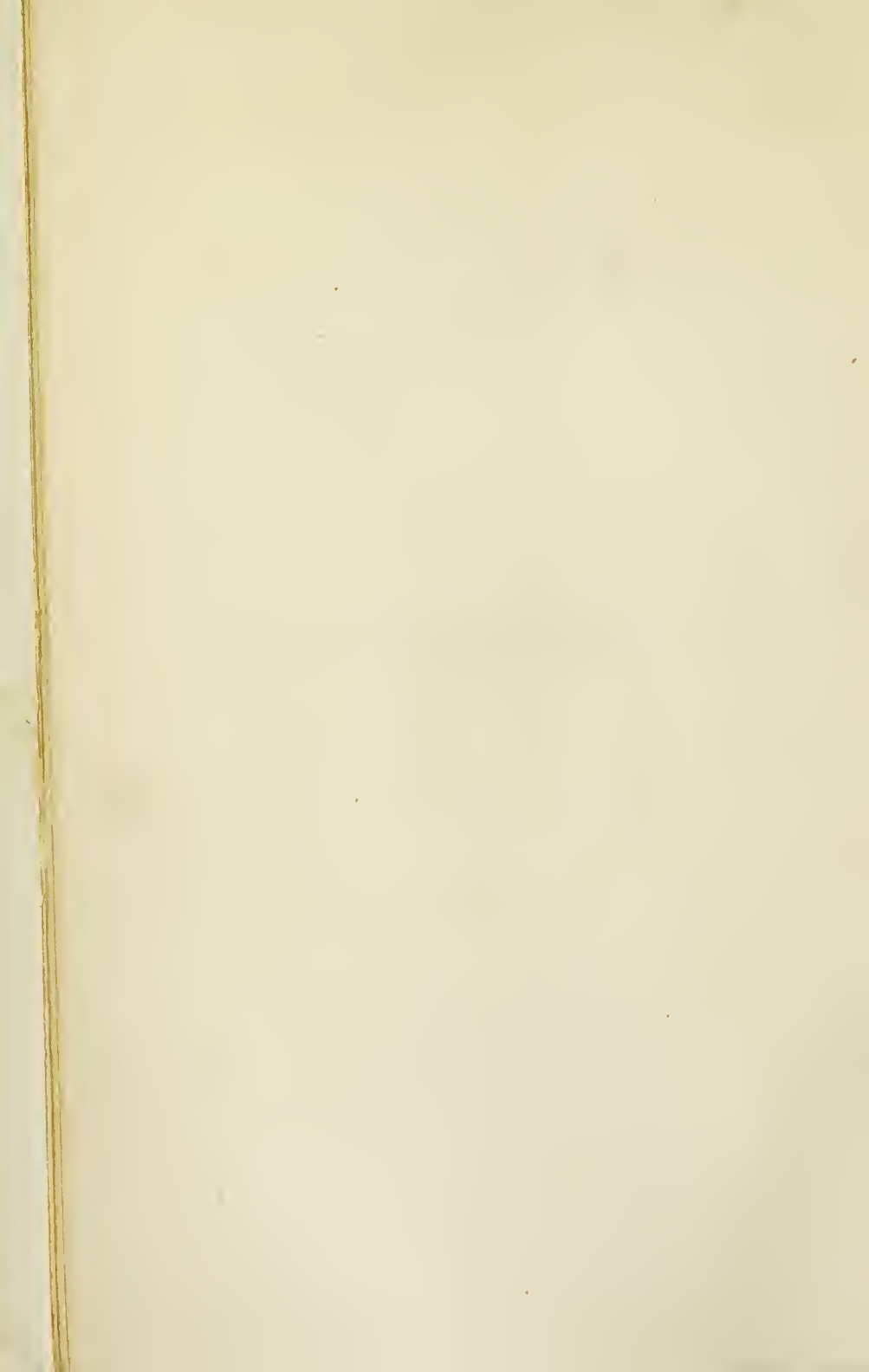




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The Prodigal of the Hills



The Prodigal of the Hills

By Edgar William Dynes



TORONTO:
WILLIAM BRIGGS
1917

PK 6007 . Y57 57

Printed in Great Britain

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The Prodigal of the Hills

PROEM

THIS is the story of the life that was won, and the life that was lost; the death that had no sting, and the grave that had no victory. A man—tired, very tired, of a never-ending struggle with the other half of himself, had all but swung himself through that automatic, self-locking gate which stands on the Broad Road that is known as the Coward's Way to Peace. A weary woman—she had been but a girl a few weeks before—looked with eagerness upon an angry, foaming torrent, and longed to smother her young sorrow in the oblivion of its billowy depths.

But the Hand of God guided the steps of the man, and my tale has a different ending. For the one came—but enough here; the pages will reveal. For the other a period of service

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was permitted. And afterwards, well—the memory of the ministry of willing hands, warm heart and eager brain brought tears to the eyes of the big-hearted men of the hills as the black plumes swept through the rocky streets of the cloud-piercing mountain town. Beyond that is a part that will live for ever. Beyond that . . .

Along the Way of Life this kind of thing has happened a good many times before. No doubt it will happen a good many times again. But this time it all happened in and around Kootenay Crossing, a mining-camp town amid the granite, sky-topped hills in the land beyond the Rockies.

When this old world was some fifteen or twenty years younger than it is now, the Crossing was the Mecca of as hardy a band of Gold Hunters as ever set a footmark on our western slopes. Then fine Gold was sent to buy Gold in the raw, and there was great increase. But although the good creeks and the surrounding hills were golden for the most part, there were spots which had other streaks. So that later Gold came and bought Country Rock. It was thus that the wild-catters brought reproach, and, eventually, quieter times; even as the big dividend payers had brought honourable fame.

My story begins with the wildest of the wild

PROEM

days of the wildest of the wild Crossing boom. Supplies were at famine prices and everything else was in proportion. Corner lots were at a premium. The man of hirsute features discovered that a talk, a shave and a smile could be had for half a dollar. The hungry put up double that amount for plain ham and eggs. In the gambling saloons the wine-glasses tinkled merrily to the music of cues and chips. Tender-feet, with the stamp of white-flowered lives on face and brow, learned how to tread the pace, and for ever more forgot how to forget.

The game of getting with spades, aces and jackpots raced with the business of earning with pick and drill. By day the delvers of the hills fought with Nature for what was hers, and by night they used their wits to secure by chance what another had won by labour. Dozens and hundreds crept up to a dizzy affluence in hours, and crashed down to despair while the swift minutes ticked away. Many the fortunes that were made in a day and lost in a night.

CHAPTER I

THE STAGE AT THE ROAD-HOUSE

THE sunny slope of one of the Kootenay mountains on an afternoon in June.

The Railroad was on the way, but had not yet arrived. In view of this, it is fitting that our story should begin with the chronicle of a stage ride. And a ride, mark you, down a five-mile swirl of switch-backs which are best described by Porcupine Bill.

"Gee whizz!—now—I tell you what!" he would often say, "of road tinkerin' it's the cussedest. Put more stakes in the graveyard than many a Gatlin' or Maxim. Yes, by the pokey! Tell you what it is," he would go on, straightening up; "if I wus tired of livin' and didn't much fancy the gun route, I'd jus' get them lead buckskins of Dolson's stringed up to a buckboard, giv' the ribbins a toss, and let the critters slide. It wud be all over before the swing of the second curve."

THE STAGE AT THE ROAD-HOUSE

Which is quite enough to say about the road.

Any more than it was the connecting link between the road-house of Arizona John and the town of Kootenay Crossing. An old-timer of those days would promptly say that this is not correct, and he would be right. We should have said the City of Kootenay Crossing. You see, a hamlet of a few dozen was called a City during the flush era when the men of the frontier went to bed with their boots on without losing their position in society.

Some time prior to the opening of our story the Crossing's principal boasts had been three in number. First, a brilliant far-back past, because of short-lived placers. Second, a mediocre present with periodic ripples of excitement when a supposed strike was made. Third, a few optimistic souls who had holes in the ground scattered over a wide area, and who treasured fond hopes of a second Butte future.

But now things were much changed. With the finding of the Silver Ledge, the Gold Streak, and the Copper Lode the first fringe of the third stage had come. The boom was on.

The paint brushes were lifting their scarlet heads above the bunch grass as four weary horses tugged the heavy stage up the long ascent near

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the Knob Hill summit. Among the passengers was the Stranger. When the stage drew up at the road-house, he was the first to alight.

He was followed by a Mining Man from Chicago and two Flush Youths from one of the middle townships of Simcoe. The latter had not succumbed to the call of the Golden West without finding barriers in the way. It transpired that the mother of one had wished her son to be either a great preacher like Spurgeon or a famous missionary like Carey—either would have satisfied her; while the father of the other had pleaded with his boy to stay on the farm and raise hogs and horses—perhaps run for the council and be reeve and warden by and by. But it was not to be. The Gold Lure had caught them. They meant to be rich men in a year.

After the long, hot drive extreme thirst was natural. Accompanied by the Mining Man they went into the road-house. Emmett was invited to follow, but politely declined.

“Huh! what have we now?—a tenderfoot!” queried Arizona John, glancing out of the window as he filled three glasses. The Flush Youths looked at each other, coloured a little beneath their tan, but neither spoke. A moment

THE STAGE AT THE ROAD-HOUSE

later it was clear that they had mistaken him. Then the Mining Man cleared his throat and answered.

"Perhaps," he said, hesitatingly. "Many of them are on the water wagon at the start. But, somehow, he doesn't strike me in just that way. I don't know what it means, or whether it was a woman or not—they are responsible for most of the trouble in this old world—but he has a look in his eyes that I never saw in the eyes of but one man before."

"And who was that?" asked one of the Flush Youths in an indifferent tone, as he feigned a sour-dough smile.

"It was a fellow who took the star part at a platform entertainment in a jail yard in Illinois," replied the Mining Man. "He had a sad, weird smile right up to the last, and in his eyes there was a look of calm resignation, and a peculiar, uncanny kind of peace. Good sport—realized it was all up with him—and met his fate like a man. There is a far-away look in this young Stranger's eyes which recalled the memory."

"Down and outer, but proud as Lucifer," commented Arizona John, half favourably, as he glanced out through the window at the lone, erect figure.

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"Shouldn't wonder if, under that veneer of mountain dust, he's a real thoroughbred," returned the Mining Man, quietly, as he placed his glass on the counter after the second round.

"Still," concluded Arizona John, "he seems to be lost—look at him!—gazing at the scenery like someone in a dream. Bet he don't know a thing about this grand, glorious, God-forsaken country. Yes, he's a tenderfoot—sure enough."

Meanwhile there was bustle and activity in front of the road-house. Active hands were loading additional freight, the baggage was being transferred, and the horses were being changed. Amid the commotion, Emmett walked slowly up and down. Now and then he looked out across the valley, vaguely wondering what kind of fortune this new land had for him. A moment later a stout buckskin pony came galloping past. The saddle on its back was empty, its eyes turned up white, the nostrils were red and distended, and the bridle rein dangled loosely around its legs. The men at the stable tried to stop it, but did not succeed.

No sooner had the runaway disappeared down the road leading to Kootenay Crossing, than a tall, young woman of a noticeably splendid physique approached the road-house from the other direction. She walked quickly, and

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seemed to be in a much perturbed mood. Seeing Emmett pacing up and down, she turned to him for information.

“ Did you see a buckskin pony pass this way ? ” was her question.

“ Yes,” he replied, respectfully, but with an almost aggravating nonchalance, “ it galloped by here a minute ago.”

She made an angry exclamation, winding up with a very positive statement of what she would do with the pony when she got home.

For a few moments he stood watching her. Her sudden anger amused him. Then she turned a pair of pensive brown eyes upon him and something happened. A strange thrill that he could not explain shot through him. But it was but for a moment. In the next she had turned away a few steps, hesitated, and stood waiting. He moved towards her slowly.

“ Is the stage going down soon ? ” she queried. She had turned toward him smiling.

“ In a few minutes,” he answered.

“ Good ! ” she returned quickly. “ I shan’t have long to wait.”

Just then he noticed a soil stain on her skirt, and he wondered if she had been hurt. It took but a moment to put the thought in a query. But she ridiculed the idea, laughing lightly, and

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perhaps a little scornfully. The very idea that anything could hurt her !

After a moment's pause, he went on, perseveringly :

" Did the pony throw you ? "

" Of course it didn't."

" Then how did it happen ? "

" It didn't happen."

" But the pony got away."

" Yes."

" But how ? "

" He just walked off."

" He galloped past here."

" Of course. A pony isn't a fool. The buckskin uses stolen freedom like anybody else."

" Oh ! "

There was sarcasm in his tone. But the sarcasm was tinged with humour. She gave him a look such as the people of the mountains sometimes waste on a tenderfoot. But he was not in the least subdued.

" I suppose the pony was tied ? " he went on.

" Why not ? " in a tone that suggested that it might be a matter of course.

" Then he broke the rein ? "

" No, he didn't ! "

" It came loose then ? "

" No, it didn't come loose, either."

THE STAGE AT THE ROAD-HOUSE

He thought of giving it up. But her glance seemed to invite him. He kept on. He was enjoying it, and so was she.

“ Well ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Ahem !—I suppose that—— ? ”

She shook her head.

“ Then what ? ”

“ Just a case of——” and she stopped, hesitating. She didn’t really want to tell him. It was almost like intimacy. It seemed as if things were moving rather fast.

“ A case of what ? ” he pressed her.

“ A case,” she went on, demurely, “ of tender-foot ignorance of our way of making ponies stand still.”

“ Except when they run away.”

“ Yes,” she admitted, reluctantly.

“ And,” he went on, “ you tie ponies up without tying and they stand still and they don’t.”

“ Rubbish ! ” she told him. “ I knew that I would have to tell you—that you would never understand. Now, when a pony is properly trained, he will stand when the reins are left hanging loose from the bit.”

“ Then,” he flashed at her quickly, “ when a pony runs off it is a case of bad training ? ”

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“ Yes—or fright.”

“ And he took fright ? ”

“ No.”

“ And this pony is yours ? ”

“ Yes.”

He smiled. Her lips closed tightly. She might have known. Something like this was bound to happen. She looked away.

The advent of Eula Lorimer had turned Godfrey Emmett's thoughts into a new channel. He noted the neatness of the plain attire and the simple beauty of the strong, sinuous, virile feminine figure. She wore a short, dark-blue skirt which scarcely came to her boot tops. The tan riding shoes were neatly polished, the silver buckles shining brightly in the sun. The right hand was hidden in a fancy, decorated moccasin glove, while the left was bowed against her side like a bent arrow. The blonde head was crowned with a wide-brimmed cowboy hat. The sailor waist was of blue and white, with a roll collar which revealed soft, full curves and the white nape of the neck where the tan had not ventured.

The face was a gentle oval, the mouth small, and the lips firm and ruddy. Something very frank and honest centred around the brown eyes that were shaded with darkened lashes.

THE STAGE AT THE ROAD-HOUSE

The face had a healthy colouring of rose and the body lines were all curves. Every nerve and muscle seemed to tingle with energy and life.

He reflected that since he had met her where he had, she must be a child of the hills and woods. Many things suggested it. Among them her talk about the pony, and her attire. And yet there were many other things which suggested something else altogether. Her manner and speech was that of a young woman who was qualified to mingle with the people of the Great World in the land beyond the ridges.

She turned towards him, and noticing his steady gaze, flushed uncomfortably. He moved away a little, devoting his attention to the scenery.

Before him stretched a wonderful panorama of beauty. Below was the green-tinted valley, and at the bottom the winding river. Scattered over sloping sides the barren grey rocks rimmed the vast amphitheatre of Nature with granite seats. The verdure of the green trees made rest backs that reminded one of green plush. Then he lifted his gaze higher. Everywhere the heads of the stately fir, the tall, trim tamarack and the proud pine waved like the billows of a never-ending sea. And last of all, cone-shaped every one, mountain peak after mountain peak

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dotted the horizon, their tips shooting up like the tops of giant tepees on a plain.

"Beautiful!" he exclaimed, hardly conscious that he was speaking aloud.

"Very," she assented with enthusiasm. "I believe that I love the mountains more every day."

"Then you have been in this country for some time?"

"Daddy has been here for more than ten years."

"And you?"

"Part of that time."

Their conversation was very rudely interrupted.

"All aboard!" the driver shouted, and they moved over toward the stage.

CHAPTER II

THE RIDE DOWN THE MOUNTAIN

AS they came near to the stage Emmett had a secret hope that chance or instinct might place them on the same seat. But it died suddenly when he saw her swing herself up on the front seat with the driver.

A moment later he found a place on the outer side of the next seat, directly behind the driver's box. The two Flush Youths—now more Flush than ever—sat beside him. Three miners, two prospectors and the Mining Man occupied the two seats in the rear.

Arizona John stood at the door of the road-house, smiling, attentive, waiting to bid them adieu.

"You want to watch that crowd as is down there," he warned them, as the stage stopped for a moment. "The Crossin' is about the livest coal I've seen since I left the lower country. They've got everythin'—gold, silver, copper, a

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sporty crowd, a horde of tin horns, lots of Scotch whisky made in Canada, and the worst beer in the mountains. Altogether it's about as full of devilment as Nineveh must have been when the Father of us all sent for Jonah."

He stopped, hesitated a moment, as though he had lost the trend of thought, and then concluded, "And remember this—there's things goin' on down there as won't stand more than their share of daylight. So watch out for the shark. Of course, in a way—one thing and another—it's all the same game—all games are the same. It's simply a case of how a man will separate easiest. But some crooks are straight and some crooks are crooked. So watch out for the crooked crook."

He laughed, then smiled blandly, doffed his hat, and stood watching them until the stage was out of sight.

They were scarcely a mile down the road when the majority of the passengers sensed that there was something wrong. The horses were running hard down the descent. The new driver, Dolson, who had taken the lines at the road-house, was in a lone minority of unconcern. The men quieted their fears by silently asserting that wild driving was not unusual in the mountains. However, the girl was not so sure. She leaned over, grew suspicious, and then stretched her

THE RIDE DOWN THE MOUNTAIN

lithe, quivering body until the warmth of the driver's breath fanned her cheek. Her nostrils were sensitive. She straightened up quickly and turned pale.

But she was a brave girl and she held herself under control. She gripped the side of the seat firmly, although the colour had left her cheeks. A moment later, the stage veered to one side, struck a snag, and she was almost thrown from her seat. Dolson slid a foot or so, but his feet were propped against the dash-rail, and this saved him. She leaned over and whispered in his ear.

If he heard what she said he paid no attention. He drove at the same reckless gait for a full mile farther. Then she bent over and spoke to him again.

He looked at her, smiled a little, and shook his head. But he drove more slowly just the same.

This movement continued until they reached a short, steep ascent, the only up grade on the down trip. The load was heavy, and the horses dropped into a walk. As they neared the top the slow gait made Dolson very angry. First he shouted, but this did but little good. Then as they reached the crest of the hill, he took the whip and applied it unsparingly. Maddened, infuriated by the cruel cuts of the biting lash, the horses leaped forward like smitten Arab steeds.

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And they were still galloping like wild, mad things when the passing of a short turn brought the heavy stage trembling on the face of a long, heavy grade—by all odds the steepest on the road. Below it were the lower switchbacks, where the road swung around short curves with a regularity that was dazzling.

Dolson was so occupied with his whip and the four troublesome horses that he overlooked the brake. As a result the heavy stage bounded forward with a lurch and swing once it was well on the sweep of the grade. A moment later he shoved the brake forward with his right foot, but it held but a second and then slipped back quickly. Again he pushed it forward, but it jarred loose from the front notch, then slipped altogether, and swished back to the rear part of the holder with a bang.

Once more the heavy stage crowded close on the wheelers. Powerless to hold it, they leaped forward with a bound.

"Mercy!" exclaimed the girl, now very thoroughly frightened. "Give me the lines—and the brake—quick—quick!"

It may be that something in her frightened tone thrilled through him, for without a moment's delay he obeyed her. But when the brake was properly adjusted she refused to give back the

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lines. Once more she had bent over. Her nostrils were very sensitive, and there was nothing in any way reassuring.

"Here—give me the lines," he commanded brusquely.

"Never," she answered him, between set teeth. "If I did, we'd all be killed."

He insisted and she remained firm. One of the Flush Youths inquired if there was not some danger.

"Of course there is," answered a gruff but not unkindly voice in the rear, "but I'd sooner trust Jack Lorimer's girl with the lines than any stage driver on the route."

Dolson now became very angry and attempted to use force. But he had no sooner gripped her wrists than two stout arms were thrown around him from behind, and he was jerked over on to the next seat, where he dropped down on the bottom of the stage box. Emmett leaped up on the front seat with a bound.

"Keep the lines," he told the girl, "I'll handle the brake."

During all this time the stage was travelling at a record speed. The front wheels whizzed like a drive-wheel on a main shaft, while the two rear wheels, locked solid with the brake, rasped over the stones noisily, the fire flying like sparks from a hot motor.

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A few feet further one fore wheel struck a large stone and the quick, jerky movement shook the brake-rod out of its notch on the holder. Emmett, being an amateur, had not held it properly. With a swift forward movement the stage bounded on faster than ever, the horses wild, mad, crazed with the natural desire to get away from the load that they could no longer hold.

Fear came to the girl now. And the horses ran harder and harder. She bit her lip and groaned. It was a runaway in very truth—there was no longer any doubt about that.

It was all she could do to exercise even a little control over the four maddened horses, eager, fretful, rebellious under the bit, and still smarting from the cruel blows of the driver's whip. At times the wheels would strike a stone, a rock or some other obstruction, and the whole stage would bound a foot or so in the air, to come down with a thud a few feet farther. And as they whirled past turn after turn and the hind wheels scraped and slid, the frightened group in the back seats prayed for pardon, and vowed that if they were permitted to reach terra firma in safety they would never ride down a steep mountain road in a stage again.

It did not happen all at once, but one by one they disappeared by way of openings under the

THE RIDE DOWN THE MOUNTAIN

rear seats. And the net result, when they took stock later on, was four cracked ribs, two sprained ankles, a bruised head, two peeled, bleeding shins, and last, but not least, grey matter that was turned upside down, and down side up, and then some after that.

At last the girl admitted that she could not guide the horses. They were getting beyond her control altogether. The hardest part was to swing the leaders sufficiently to make the sharp turns. Time after time the hind wheels slid to the edge of the steep bank. The danger was constantly getting greater. And as they approached a turn that had many times been the cause of a special trip to the graveyard, the girl told Emmett to take the lines of the wheelers, while she would concentrate her whole strength upon the wild, maddened pair of buckskins in the lead. Without the delay of a second he obeyed her.

And not a moment too soon. They approached the turn at a terrific speed. A new suitcase jumped out sideways, and was lost in a sprinkling of grey dust. A gladstone bag took the same route and reached the ground with a flop like the return call of a disabled balloon.

And still the stage whirled on without leaving the road. The girl tugged at the lead lines,

THE PRODIGAL OF THE HILLS

while Emmett jerked at the bits of the wheelers. Both were desperate. They were hanging on like a crowd of long-enduring sailors on the losing side in a tug of war. Emmett wondered if it would not be the wisest thing to jump, and bid her do the same. But one glance at her set face made him change his mind. Dolson was crawling up towards them from under the seat, but he was too busy to notice. And even as he struggled to rise, he fell back. Arizona John's bad whisky had done its work.

The turn was made, but not without accident. In spite of Eula's best efforts the leaders swung too far outward. The spreaders to which they were hitched, being fastened to the tongue, swayed it continually, preventing the wheel horses from properly guiding the stage. The result was that the outer front wheel struck a large rock—much larger than had yet been encountered—and the side of the stage lifted, sprang, and dropped to the ground a rod length further on. Just then a wriggling bundle went over the dash-rail. Emmett threw out his arm, but it was already too late. Something struck a stone, and there was a sound like the cracking of a shell.

“Oh, God!” prayed the girl, terrified. “Dear God!—help us.”

THE RIDE DOWN THE MOUNTAIN

“Amen!” gasped Emmett, as he held grimly on.

That was all. No more was said. There was not time. They kept right on with the work in hand, for it was still far from done.

They were now about a mile and a half from the Crossing. There was still a stretch of perilous road before them. The horses were running harder than ever. Every primordial instinct in the crazed brutes seemed to be revived. There had been a complete renaissance of the wild days of a far-back ancestry which, knowing nothing of the taming of man, had roamed in the woods, unfettered by bridle or bit.

There were two turns more. One would be easy compared with some they had passed, but the other would mark the crisis of all. After passing the first they found themselves going down a long, steep grade leading to the bottom of a narrow canyon, where a bridge crossed a small creek. If they could make that turn there was some hope.

If they concluded that the turn was impossible there were two alternatives. One was that they cross the bridge and head the horses up the rocky bank on the further side. It would mean a quick stop and safety. And yet—there was danger. Eula knew that she might not be able to control the horses sufficiently to do it.

THE PRODIGAL OF THE HILLS

If the buckskins insisted on turning as usual at the curve the stage would be upset and they would all be killed. The bottom of the canyon was a grate of jagged rocks.

The other alternative was that they pull the horses into the bed of the creek at the other side of the bridge. This was fraught with unguessed possibilities also, and was rather to be shunned. But everything was a problem. Finally it was the girl who settled things.

"Don't try to make the turn," she commanded. "Pull hard on the left line, and we'll make them climb the bank. We'll stop them—we will—we can."

Emmett did her bidding and they both tugged and jerked on the left lines. He was not sure that she was right, but he was fired with her enthusiasm. But all their efforts seemed to be of no avail. Measured by the degree of attention paid by the horses there might have been no lines or driver or any manner of control at all. The girl closed her eyes. She feared that it was all over—had all but given up.

"Dear God!" she prayed, "save us—and if—if something does happen—keep—look after daddy, and watch over him evermore."

And then in an instant the man became the leader. His voice roused her to sudden action.

THE RIDE DOWN THE MOUNTAIN

"Pull—pull for your life," he shouted. "Don't let them cross the bridge—we'll pull them into the creek bed above. Now—there—that's better—we're making them notice—a few good jerks—but harder—once more—now—just one long pull—a jerk will help—and again—there—my ! how strong you are," all unconscious that in the emergency he was tugging with the strength of three men himself.

With a wild plunge the horses leaped down the bank into the creek bed. The tongue struck a snag, cracked, slivered and broke. The stage landed on a huge boulder and turned over on its side. The horses began to kick and to fight.

They were both thrown out, but in a moment Emmett found his feet. Eula had been on the lower side as the stage turned and he saw a little trickle of blood amid the blonde hair. He made a quick movement and lifted the fainting girl in his arms.

He laid her down gently, carried water from the creek and bathed face and neck. At last, between fitful gasps, he became aware that she was speaking.

"My—that—that was lucky. And you did it—really you did—and I—I said—I thought—I fancied that you were only a tenderfoot."

CHAPTER III

THE COVERED UP THING AT THE BRIDGE

A HALF hour passed.

With a bundle of blankets for a pillow, and a white bandage around her head, Eula was lying stretched out on the long, soft grass. The cut was no more than a flesh wound and not serious.

Once more Godfrey brought her some water from the creek. She murmured her thanks and lifted the cup to her lips with a graceful gesture. Her strength was coming back now.

He looked up the road and her gaze followed his. She put a question, but he shook his head and turned away without a word.

The horses required his attention. The leaders had torn themselves free, but the others tramped about in a circle, peevish, fretful. He unhitched them, tied a note to the bridle of the most docile, and at a mad gallop they started for the Crossing.

THE COVERED UP THING AT THE BRIDGE

Very slowly he walked back to where she reclined on the bundle of blankets, that had so often been the bed of many a dweller in the hills. She glanced up at him as he approached, a look of troubled appeal in her brown eyes.

"I wonder?" she began, and halted. Again glancing up the road, she went on, "Do you suppose that?" and stopped again.

"I don't know," he answered quietly.

She looked up at him quickly, her eager eyes bright, and her face lighted up with the beauty and mystery of his understanding.

A breath of wind rose, whistled through the tree-tops, and lost itself in a feeble, echoing roar in the vale below.

Suddenly she drew herself up to a sitting posture, ankle crossed over instep, supple limbs swung apart, shapely hands clasped around her knees, brown hat on the grass by her side, blonde head bent over slightly, and the sunshine playing hide and seek in the folds of her dull golden hair.

Within that troubled head thought ran riot. Now it raced wildly, again it swayed in its orbit, and then would suddenly encounter a situation impossible of contemplation, not to be thought of—too horrible for placid acceptance without definite proof.

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Meanwhile he stood there watching her, meditating, silent, his mind busy with but the one thought he feared to harbour, yet could not wholly chase away.

Then, like a breath of air, there came the sound of a steady pat, pat, pat on the road above. The girl sat up and turned deathly pale. The time was coming, and she knew it. Having turned from the suggestion she would have to support the reality. Her eyes were moistening, and the long, tapering finger twisted nervously.

The steady pat, pat, pat on the road above became more clear and distinct. Then they came into sight, a weary, depressed little company, with a covered-up thing between them. It did not seem that they could have got down so soon. They laid it down on the bridge and gathered around, hats off with reverence, heads bowed low and hearts full.

Godfrey drew away the coat which covered what lay beneath. His simple act exposed the rude features. There was no doubt that Dolson was quite dead.

One of the men made a suggestion. Emmett searched through the coat, hoping to find some clue as to where friends and relatives might be found. He had about given up the search when he came upon a photograph—that of a handsome

THE COVERED UP THING AT THE BRIDGE

young woman with a baby in her arms. It was a good face, and the expression of every feature proclaimed the sweet joy of motherhood. Across the corner was written :

“ From Hazel,
“ To my dear Jim.”

He handed it to Eula without a word. As she looked at the fair features of mother and child, she trembled, wondering—speechless. Hastily glancing at Emmett their eyes met, each reading the thoughts of the other. A tear rolled out on his cheek, and she was surprised to find herself wondering why. Was it merely because of what had happened ? That was enough, of course ; but there was allied with this a feeling that there was something else—something deeper.

For about thirty seconds there was silence—absolute.

“ Is there no address ? ” she asked, a little huskily, as she took note of some papers that were in his hand.

“ None,” he replied slowly.

One of the prospectors, who, because of his having come from that famous peninsula which lies between Lake Huron and Georgian Bay, was called “ Bruce Jimmy,” took the photo,

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gazed at it for a few moments, and then passed it from man to man.

Like the pall of a swift nightfall, a hush fell upon the little company. The deadly stillness of the air wafted a low threnody of grief. The sighing of the wind through the trees echoed a sweet, low dirge of peace. And all around them, fifty feet tall or more, were numerous fir sentinels, their heads bowing and swaying in the wind as though they understood.

CHAPTER IV

"MY MOUNTAINS"

VERY little was said until they were well on the way to the Crossing.

"Dod gast it," affirmed Bruce Jimmy, "I always knew it—a buze fighter can't hang out."

"Quite so—quite so!" agreed Tim Shields. "Anybody who loaded up inside the way he did is bound to have furnished rooms to let in his upper story at the wrong time and in a tight place."

"Furnished be hanged. Unfurnished, you mean. Oh, confound it!" he concluded, with emphasis, "they don't sell whisky around here—dope, I tell you—dope!"

Further on the Two Youths and the Mining Man walked abreast.

"I wish that Jimmy had been with us," lamented Lennox, the younger of the two.

"Who?" queried Traverson.

"Jimmy—why, you know—Jimmy, the poet."

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"But him—what use would——?"

"None at all—that I grant. But he might have got some new ideas for that forthcoming volume of his on Western Adventures."

"Surely!"

"Easterner?" queried the Mining Man.

Lennox nodded.

"Thought so. Huh! Ambitious—poet, seer, interpreting the great drama of the West, and never got farther than Petrolia."

"No, just Oakville."

"Hum! It's just about as I thought."

"Well," concluded Traverson, who had read Kipling and Bret Harte, "at least he would have got some ideas on swift action."

"True," admitted the Mining Man, "he would that."

Emmett and the girl brought up the rear. Already there seemed to be some sort of an understanding between them. Very quietly they walked along, saying but little, and thinking much. Curiously enough, although neither would have cared to admit it, their thoughts were not a little of each other.

How strange, he was thinking, that out in this wild, new land he should find a woman like this!—all the courage, unconventionality and fearlessness of the mountains, combined with the

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sweet, intimate, feminine graces which are the crown of her sex.

“ How splendid and strong he is ! ” she found herself musing. “ And yet—those eyes—there is something sad about them. I wonder what it is that he has lost ? ”

With the shadow of what had happened hanging over them continuous conversation seemed to be impossible. Both made brave attempts and failed miserably. He made a chance remark about a wayside mountain flower that he had never seen before, and she identified the species. She observed that the sun was particularly hot, and that it looked as though a drought had set in. There had been no rain for weeks. Nearing the Crossing they made a short cut across a switch-back and he fell in behind her on the narrow trail. Almost unconsciously he noted the stray curls on the nape of the white neck. Gazing lower, the simple grace of the moving figure, firm and erect, coupled with a girlish, swaying rhythm of hip and shoulder, held him with a peculiar fascination. Once within sight of the Crossing they suddenly became talkative.

“ I expect the pony has gone to Cameron’s,” she commented, mentioning a well-known livery firm. “ I’ll go there first.”

“ But you are not going out to-night ? ”

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“Certainly—why not?”

“But it is too late.”

A glance at the western sky had already shown the sun shimmering down behind waves of yellow-crimson clouds.

“Why too late?”

“Well, I suppose that—and——” He stopped, hesitating. He could not say what he wanted to when she looked at him like that.

“Exactly,” she returned, her eyes glittering. “Then I may tell you that there is no danger. Everyone knows me. And there is not a man who would molest me—why——”

“Perhaps your father will meet you?” he interrupted.

“No, he is away in Copper Cliff Valley.”

“Rancher, is he?”

“Not exactly.”

“Then what——?”

“I am afraid that you would not understand. I call him a forerunner.”

“A forerunner?”

“Yes.”

He looked at her, puzzled. It was clear that he did not understand.

“It is my own word,” she explained. “I invented the term myself. The western world calls him a prospector. He is always about to

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make the fortune that he had almost made twenty-five or more years ago. Most prospectors get their reward where the itinerant preacher gets his.”

Before he had time to answer she went on.

“ He goes before—pioneers—clears the way—don’t you see ? ”

He nodded.

“ The promoter generally calls him something far different,” she continued. “ If a price is asked for a claim that he deems to be excessive, he dubs him an obstinate unreasonable. If the opposite is true he closes in a hurry, and chuckles about dealing with any easy mark. The last time it was the latter way.”

There was just a little touch of bitterness in her tone, as though something that had been very near had finally escaped them.

“ Turned out to be a bonanza, did it ? ”

“ Almost, and daddy only got thirty-five——”

“ Thirty-five hundred—— ? ”

“ Mercy—no ! Thirty-five thou——”

“ Oh, I see.”

“ Why, yes, he had spent nearly that amount in development work. The broker and the promoter made more—they split fifty-five between them—they always do get the long end. I hope that you are not a promoter ? ”

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They parted in front of the Boundary Hotel. She, to go to Cameron's for the pony, and he, to reserve a room for the night.

As he entered the lobby he noticed a young woman with a little girl of very tender years by her side. The face struck him as familiar. Surely he had seen that woman somewhere before? Then in a moment the possible meaning of it all swept over him, and he grew sick at heart. The little girl looked at him fixedly for a moment, and then turned to her mother with earnest, childish appeal.

"Mamma, what keeps him so long?" she queried. "I'se wants him—I'se wants Daddy Jim."

The mother hushed her into quiet and mounted the flat to the stairs above. But once up in the upper hallway the little girl in a piping, childish voice repeated the same touching appeal, "Mamma, I'se so tired of waiting. I'se wants Daddy Jim."

As Godfrey scribbled his signature on the hotel register he overheard the clerk make a remark to the proprietor.

"When did she come in?" returned the latter.

"About three hours ago," replied the clerk.

"Which way?"

"On the lower stage. She should have met

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him at the Summit, but was directed the wrong way—came by Helphrey’s Meadows.”

“ And the little tad has never seen her father ? ”

“ Seems not. She mentioned it more than once.”

“ Then there is one bit of disillusionment that has been saved her.”

“ Yes,” admitted the clerk, not sure that he saw the point.

“ Too bad ! Too bad ! ” went on the proprietor. “ But somebody will have to tell her—I wonder who ? ”

A minute later Emmett walked out into the street and found that his companion of the afternoon was employed in watering her pony at a great wooden trough which was fed by a spring that rippled down the mountain side. He tightened the girths and assisted her to mount.

“ How well you do it ? ” she commented, blushing a little, as he lifted her up without an effort.

“ Surely,” he returned, “ but tell me ?—what does it—— ? ” His admiring glance swept over the splendid, well-formed feminine figure, so radiant with energy and life.

No answer. Merely a joyous, bright little laugh.

“ Is it the mountains ? ”

“ I am afraid that I do not understand you. Really, your question seems just a little bit

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impertinent. But I can say this—that anything I have, I owe to common sense, pure food, an open-air life, natural optimism and my mountains. Emphasis on *my mountains*.”

“ Really ? ”

“ Yes, truly—would you like to see *my mountains*, Mr. Emmett ? ”

She stopped a moment, and then added, “ You should consider yourself privileged.

“ I do—and yet you forget——”

“ Forget what ? ”

“ Forget that I have been travelling through them for days.”

“ Yes, but not through *my mountains*. Mountains may seem alike, and yet in reality they are as different as—as faces. See there ” —and she waved a bare arm to the west with a graceful gesture—“ in that realm of rock and fir and pine I know every nook and cranny, every spring and rivulet, like one knows the oft-read pages of a favourite book. And knowing it, I love it all—every sweet breath of air, every bubbling spring, every green tree and every shining blade that springs up from the fragrant earth.” She laughed lightly. “ It’s a little empire of my own. Would you really like to see it, Mr. Emmett ? ”

“ I’d be delighted. When could—— ? ”

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“ Really—how can I know ? One week, two weeks, three weeks—you are to remain in the Crossing ? ”

He nodded.

“ Then you will come when you can—in short, when the mood is on. To understand and love the mountains you have got to enter into the great spirit of the hills—the wide spaces that lift one up and up. A person is not always in the mood.”

“ You can be sure that I will come very soon.”

“ Daddy will be so glad to see you. Thank you very much. You see, so very few strangers ever come to Pine Ridge.”

He was human enough for the next query.

“ And you—— ? ” he added.

“ I—oh, I will be there,” she told him as she galloped off. He lifted his hat and stood watching her until she was out of sight.

Walking down the street, he stopped in front of the office of a Crossing barrister. He gazed a moment at the rudely-painted wooden sign :

SAMUEL M. MAYLOR,
Barrister & Solicitor,
Notary Public.

He lifted the latch and walked in, shutting the door quietly.

CHAPTER V

THE PRODIGAL'S NEW HOME

“**D**ID you hear about the runaway ?” This was the question which Samuel M. Maylor put to his wife as soon as he came home, a little later the same evening.

“No,” she replied quietly, “what happened ?”

He told her all he knew. And since he had been talking with Godfrey Emmett he was very well informed.

“And doesn’t *she* know yet ?” his wife questioned him when he was through.

“She didn’t know a few minutes ago.”

“How tragic ! The poor woman had just arrived—is alone—and has no friends.”

He passed into the dining-room. She followed a moment later, a thoughtful look on her motherly face. They were strangely quiet as they took their places at the dinner-table.

“My new man has arrived,” he remarked as the soup was being served.

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"Your new man?" in a surprised tone.

"Yes, this fellow Emmett—the one who told me about the runaway. He came in on the stage."

"Is he the man whom Wentworth was thinking of sending?"

"He is."

"But I thought you wrote that he had better not come?"

"I did. But it seems Wentworth had not received my last letter at the time he left."

"How unfortunate!" she speculated, and then dropped off into silence, the pensive dark eyes mysterious and troubled. The spoon she was holding slipped out of her fingers with a light, silvery clatter, the echo resounding throughout the room. One elbow rested on the table, and the right hand supported cheek and chin as she gazed, preoccupied and unseeing, at the colouring of the paper on the opposite wall. For a few minutes the silence continued unbroken. Feelings of doubt, amazement and wonder swept over her in turn. Her heart beat quicker for a time, then stilled suddenly, and fell back into the rhythm of its dull, even beat.

"Well?" her husband inquired, looking at her closely.

"Puzzled?" she ventured, smiling feebly.

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He nodded.

"I am a little puzzled myself," she admitted. "I really do not know why I should be so much concerned. It seems almost like an omen. But I do know the Crossing, and I also know something—what you have told me—of this young man. And I can't help wondering what effect the one may have upon the other."

"He should do well. It is a splendid legal opportunity—a rare chance."

"I know it is. But I didn't mean that kind of a chance."

"Then you were thinking of——?"

"Of the moral hazard," she interrupted.

"Oh!"

"Yes, I have been thinking——"

"He has a set lip."

"Even so."

"And a good chin."

"No doubt—no doubt, but there is more than that. Perhaps he may not have——?"

"He's a strange fellow," he interrupted, as though he had not heard her speaking. "I can't quite forget his look. He has a pair of world-weary, grey-blue eyes."

"Grey-blue eyes! I had a friend with eyes like that. They always seemed to tell a story."

"And so with his. I noticed that."

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"Wentworth might have known better than to send him. If he had only received your second letter in time?"

"It may be that he wanted to get rid of him."

"Perhaps. What does the young man say about it himself? Or—or—I suppose that you did not mention it?"

"I did not care to, but I did. I thought that it was wiser—better to have it over with."

"And what did he say?"

"He said that he knew that it was going to be a fight, that he had realized it for a time; and, barring the fact it was better to be away from the old associates, the place where the fight was made did not really matter at all."

"Brave! Courageous!" she commented; "but I wonder if he really knows?"

"Really knows what?"

"What the Crossing is really like."

"I am not sure," returned her husband, "but I don't believe that he does. By the way, here is the letter of introduction he brought," and he drew it out of his pocket and tossed it toward her.

The writer was none other than Stephen F. Wentworth, K.C., a member of the well-known eastern law firm of Wentworth, Madigan,

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Burns, Bird and Allison. The letter was a gathering of parting comments swinging around the personality of his friend and former protégé, Godfrey Emmett, a young law student, all but ready to be admitted to the bar, and one of the cleverest young men he had ever had in their office.

"He's a great nature boy—goes wild over mountains," commented the lawyer, while his wife was reading.

"Oh."

"Yes, he plans to take long walks in the hills, and to spend a great deal of time in the open. He thinks that this will help to furnish an antidote. He may be right."

"I hope so," she answered, and went on reading.

"Sam, dear," she queried, a moment later, "what is the Good Fellows' Inn?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because that is where this young man was staying."

"Is that so!" he exclaimed in astonishment.

"I must have overlooked that."

"But what is it?"

He shrugged his shoulders and shook his head.

"But, Samuel—what is it?—I want to know."

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“ I'd prefer not to tell you—but if you must know—it is a swell boarding-house—a club house for the élite, in fact—where they eat the best, drink the worst, and in general go plumb to the devil.”

“ But, Sam ! ”

“ It's quite right. They go plumb to the devil.”

She went on reading.

“ And they elected him Royal King of the Good Fellows,” she told him a moment later.

“ Just makes it so much the worse,” he asserted. “ The Crossing is alive with all kinds of Good Fellows, and the man who passes up what they take, and scorns what they approve, is dubbed either a crank or a fool.”

“ And they—they sometimes call you—— ? ”

He saw that he had involved himself, and he would have liked to draw back. But he had to be honest.

“ No, they don't,” he answered, frankly.

“ But, Samuel—— ? ”

“ Shssh ! ” he interrupted. “ I have learned—am learning—what shall I call it ?—it seems to me that commercial wisdom is a good word. You remember the old adage—when you are in Rome do as the Romans do. Now, I believe that the author of that remark would have had

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sense enough to make a fortune in the closing days of the nineteenth century."

She looked at her husband again, peering closely, as though he were a strange being with whom she was just getting acquainted. She went on with the letter.

"I wonder," she inquired a little later, as the dessert was disappearing. "if this young man is any relation of the late Frank Emmett?"

"He is a son."

"A son! Sam, dear, are you sure?" The last words came out very slowly and distinctly, as though a good deal might depend on them, and the answer that would follow.

"Positive."

"But——"

"The young man told me so himself."

"Then everything is explained. It is all clear now."

"What is clear?"

"I thought you knew—thought that everybody knew about Frank Emmett—the way he lived, and how he died."

"I never heard. I knew him only by reputation. I recall that in his young days he was considered one of the most promising young men at the Ontario bar."

"I have no doubt—he was so very clever.

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I knew him very well. He married an old school friend of mine, Gertie Farish. She was a lovely girl—warm-hearted and generous. We were great chums and just like sisters. But I heard from her very seldom after her marriage.”

“Were they happy?”

“Very—at first. Later, he began to drift off. And when the end came so suddenly it broke her heart. It seems that she had no idea that it had gone so far.”

“And what was the matter?”

“Oh, the old, old handicap. Not enough will and too much throat.”

“Indeed!”

“Yes, it just seemed as though he could not help it.”

“And the end?”

“There was a quarrel one night. A shot was fired, and he was the one who was hit. Gertie died a few months later, leaving a motherless babe—a boy.”

“This fellow—now?”

“Evidently—yes.”

“Unlucky boy!” he muttered.

“Poor boy!” she repeated, and then suddenly, as her face lighted up, “just to think that after all these years I am to meet him—Gertie’s boy—and this way.”

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"He's a pretty old boy," he put in.

"Yes, but a boy," she returned. "Whatever maturity he may have he will be a boy to me. And I can't fancy him anything else than a boy at heart."

Rising, he walked slowly over to the window, glancing out toward a camp fire on the mountain side. He stood there a moment, leaning forward, his hand on the curtain, and then turned, and dropped into a big easy chair. His wife went to the kitchen, gave an order to the servant, returned in a moment, came over to the window, stooped over, reclined, shifted, and finally found a seat on the arm of the familiar big chair, one arm thrown around the neck of the man whose habit was to sit with her in the gloaming, talking quietly, reviewing the hours since the morning, a few minutes they could call their own after the worry and confusion of the day.

To-night she was very quiet at first. He made an observation with regard to a recent magazine article which had been attracting wide attention, but instead of making some reply, she gazed about listlessly, vacantly staring, the mind troubled, and the inner vision peering far.

Not noticing her peculiar mood, he talked on.

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He told her of the increase in his business, an important retainer just arranged with a wealthy mining company, the increased prestige that this would give him—just the kind of a talk that a successful man likes to pour into the ears of the one woman to whom his success means most.

But to-night, instead of the usual enthusiastic response, she burst into tears. He gathered her in his arms and laid her head upon his breast as though she had been a child.

“Oh, it’s nothing,” she returned, replying to his query and exclamation of surprise. “It’s just the old thing—it sort of overpowered me. Our talk about *him* and Gertie—it brought it all back. I know that I shouldn’t go on like—like this—but—it—it—I don’t know—it always seemed so peculiar—that Gertie should have what she wanted so little, and that I should have been denied what I wanted so much.”

He drew her closer and kissed her on the cheek.

“We often talked of it,” she went on, comforted, “and marvelled at the difference in our view-point. I always raved over kiddies—their baby faces, and soft, dinky little bodies. I never tired of kissing and fondling them—dreaming always of the day when I would caress and fondle one of my own. And she—oh, yes, afterwards—she just worshipped it when it came,

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but she didn't desire it the way I did then, nor the way I have longed for it ever since. Poor dear! Her happiness was very short-lived."

It was their problem. Once more they faced the hidden thing that had marred the beauty of their life together. Many things they had found and enjoyed in the years since the words which had sealed their union had been spoken, but this thing, desired above all others, had been denied. Absorption in business and a more constant contact with the world had blunted the hurt for him, while the seclusion of the home and the transplanting in a new land—tearing away from the old friendships at an age when the new friendships are not found so easily—had only aggravated the wound for her.

"I didn't think you felt it so keenly," he told her, after what seemed a very long silence. "If you could find some new interest—some——?"

"You are right. If we could just do something for this homeless, fatherless, motherless boy."

For some reason he did not at first enter into full sympathy with her idea and thought.

"Yes, I can," he told her frankly, as he toyed with her slim, shapely hand, and brushed it across his lips. "I can make him work hard—very—very hard. It's the best weapon to us in fighting the devil."

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"But that—that is nothing. That is for you. There must be something for me. And I am so anxious to see him. Couldn't you bring him up to the house?"

"He is coming up to-night."

"That's fine," she told him. The telephone rang, and he went to answer it.

He was gone for several minutes. Alone, she nestled back among the soft cushions of the big chair, pondering her problem, reflecting upon the barren waste in her life, because she had come along the pathway with empty hands. No baby laughter had ever made music in her home, and the peaceful quiet of the household had never been disturbed by the patter of little feet upon the stair. And while the eager thought flitted back and forth an idle hand left the knee where it had rested and swept up until it reached her breast, nestling there with a clinging, maternal gesture. There was a vacant spot there—the mother bosom had never thrilled and throbbed at the touch of tiny hands and soft, satin cheek.

"Samuel," she began, when her husband came back, "I was thinking," and then stopped, hesitating.

"Well?"

"Why couldn't we bring him up here?"

"But he is coming up to-night."

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“ Yes, but not for good.”

“ Of course not, Annie. We are not running a boarding-house.”

“ I know—I know. But I just felt that it might be that nothing would help him so much as the harbour of a home.”

“ Don’t you think that you had better wait until you see him ? ” he returned coldly.

“ Perhaps.” Her voice was very quiet. It was clear that she was not convinced.

They talked further of the young man who was coming into their lives—into the life of one in one way—into the life of the other in another. He wondered how useful he would be, was very hopeful, and the words were spoken. She wondered how much his coming would mean to her, but the words were left unuttered. There was a part that was too sacred for speech. But both were optimistic, glad, planned a little, roughly sketched much more, and vaguely wondered if he would make good.

There was a step upon the walk.

The young man who was ushered into the Maylor parlour is not easily described. There was an elusive appealing quality about his personality that is not readily conveyed in words.

Getting down to details, the skin was clear, unspotted, and the grey-blue eyes peered out at

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you, frank, winning, unfearing. The hair was a dark brown ; the nose was long, but well-formed, and not pointed at the tip ; the forehead was broad and high, and above, the dark brown hair, parted at the left, was brushed over in a way that shaded the right temple. The chin that we have talked about before plainly indicated benevolence upon the part of the Creator and a certain dogged persistence about the Created. In repose there was a noticeable sensitiveness about the mouth, coupled with a slight quivering of the nostrils when excited, a little shade of nervousness, which indicated an overflow of nervous energy and in a small way suggests that strange thing that we have come to know as temperament.

They gave him a hearty welcome. Mrs. Maylor shook him warmly by the hand, holding it longer than was necessary, and wondering whether or not she would dare to bend over and kiss him. For he was just like what she had dared to hope he would be like. She longed to take this handsome, lovable, fatherless, motherless big boy in her arms. She bent near, determined to do it, and then changed her mind.

"I'm so glad to see you," she told him, as they stood there with clasped hands. "Your mother was my closest girlhood friend."

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“ You knew her—mother ? ” He talked as though in a dream.

“ Yes,” she replied softly, and he felt a thrill run through him as she dropped his hand.

It was thus that their friendship began. She had dozens of questions to ask him. Did he remember his mother ? No, of course he did not—she had forgotten for the moment—she might have known. And how—well—just how old was he ?—for she was sure that she had forgotten—it was so long ago—and yet so short, too.

And then—on his side. Just when had she known his mother ? And wouldn't she tell him about it ? It seemed as though this was an almost inexhaustible theme. She found time to tell him that she saw many little resemblances between him and her girlhood friend—the same merry twist about the corners of the mouth, and a similar suggestion of risibility about the expression of the face when he looked like he was looking just then. And the result ?—there could be but one. The man was awakened. His face betrayed the translucent glow of a fire that can only be ignited at the domestic hearth.

In the midst of their interest in each other Samuel Maylor interjected a question.

“ Is there anything new about the runaway ? ”

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he asked. "About the woman, I mean. Did you hear if they had told her?"

"Yes," returned Emmett, "they broke the news to her just before I came up."

"And how did she take it?" inquired Mrs. Maylor.

"She fell on the floor in a faint. The doctor was a half-hour bringing her around."

The tragic happening of the day became the topic. Mrs. Maylor talked most about the woman. Maylor remarked that Jim Dolson had been one of the best horsemen in the mountains when he was sober. Their visitor talked most of the little girl.

Later in the evening Godfrey became interested in a contemplation of the possibilities of the new land, with whose fortunes he was casting his lot. The stories of fortune-making thrilled him. He was told of how that a young man, hardly out of his teens, had struck pay ore, and incidentally fame and fortune, just a few weeks before. He learned that a great smelter—second to only one or two in the world—was to be built shortly. He rubbed his eyes when he was informed that Main Street property had risen from four to four hundred dollars a foot within a quarter of a year. And it was made very clear to him that the recent rich strikes on the Gold Bug, the

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Morning Star, the Iron Back, the Big Payer, and a few others, were bringing a whirl of fortune-making that was taking the boomer up in the clouds and sober men off their feet.

“But they don’t all win, you know,” put in Mrs. Maylor, as her husband finished a new Aladdin story, more romantic than any of the rest. “Some have to lose—and there are so many ways—this way and that. Some make by day and lose by night.”

Godfrey looked away, colouring slightly. She was quick to notice and she wished that she had her thoughtless words back again. But with rare intuition she went to the piano, played a few notes, and then asked if he could sing. He shook his head. She glanced at him, smiling, unconvinced, a strange mute appeal in her look.

He took his place by her side. Together they sang many of the old, old songs, and as the soft notes trilled out she wondered what she had better do. She could not deny that her heart went out to him. Would she ask him to come and live with them?—Gertie’s boy. She didn’t know—she couldn’t tell. She knew that she wanted him—needed him to fill the vacant niche in her life. And she fancied that it might be that his starved life hungered for what she had to offer. And yet nothing was clear. Better

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wait, Prudence said. Inclination urged her on —“Do it now.”

When he affirmed that it was time to go she smiled as she struck the first note of another song. He smiled in answer, and in a moment the room was ringing with the throbbing notes of the few lines which have made the name of Payne immortal. Almost unconsciously an invisible bond seemed to creep up between them. And as their voices mingled in an expression of the longing that had swept the heart of the homeless bard he felt his heart thump and throb. In spite of all his self-control a distant scene rose up before him, and a tear oozed out on his cheek. She glanced towards him, but he avoided her look, hoping that she had not seen. But she had seen, and that decided her.

“You are much too kind,” he told her, when she made the offer. She persisted, while he made scores of flimsy objections—he would be a lot of trouble, and other kindred complaints. In the end he accepted.

Before he left she took him up to the room that would be his. It was a large, dainty, homey room, the south window of which looked down the valley towards the border of Uncle Sam's domain on the horizon beyond.

CHAPTER VI

IN THE NEW LAND ALONE

AS Godfrey Emmett walked back to the hotel the swell of the shady, night side of Crossing life was coming in at full tide. The revelry had begun now—in another hour it would be at its height. Every saloon door stood wide open, emitting the insistent monotone of idle gossip and the pungent odour of liquid fire. In the gambling dens the soft mellow light shone over the green tables and the roulette wheels whirled incessantly. From the dance halls there came the swell of the swift, riotous, intoxicating music, and the soft, purring laughter of handsome women, and the echoes of the responses of strong, rugged men. And everywhere, mingled like the animal calls of a farmyard, he heard the clink of the glasses, the rattle of the chips, and the laughter and exultations of those who had won.

Those less fortunate bore their loss in silence, or muttered curses beneath their breath. True

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sports to a man, there was no admitting that defeat affected them, even if it did.

As Godfrey walked about the town he encountered miners and promoters in groups of twos and threes, talking excitedly of leads and veins. The whole atmosphere seemed to be charged with the romance of mining—the delving below for silver, copper, gold. He heard of how that almost every day new mines were being placed on the experimental shipping list, while the older properties, already on a solid basis, were continually increasing their output. An endless grist of wealth was being dug up from the bowels of old Mother Earth with the passing of each glad new day.

And as he strolled about, slowly and quietly, making careful observations as he went, the lure of this wild, new camp, with its seemingly endless resources and its stirring life, swept over him like a flood. The stir, the buzz, the grip of it all got a strange, strong hold upon him. From ankle to brain-cell he was all athrob. His whole being thrilled at the prospect of living amid this marvellous bustle of activity where a young man came into his own without waiting for the man ahead to use a plumed equipage in making a last pilgrimage to a green field all shot over with white, glistening shafts.

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On the street corner he tarried a moment, idly dreaming, and yet intently gazing upon the panorama of life and movement as it swept swiftly by. Presently a young woman, handsome and extravagantly dressed, spotted him in his lone seclusion. She smiled, laughed a little, shrugged her shoulders and came over to where he stood, her eyes frank in her admiration of his faultless figure. She greeted him with a careless familiarity, and then laid her hand upon his arm. He turned away without a word. The girl, furiously angry, heaped abuse upon him, but he paid no attention and strode on.

He thought of going back to the hotel at once, but finally changed his mind. He was so overwrought with the happenings of the day that he knew he could not sleep just yet. He turned down a side street, determined to make a wide detour, to take a long walk in the valley, to go he cared not where, as long as the movement of limbs and body and the bracing night air quieted the fevered brain and the quickened pulses, restoring him to his natural self.

Not knowing the streets and the byways of the Crossing, his purpose was sadly frustrated. For presently he came upon a street where many lights made the night like day, and from behind the curtained windows there came the sound of

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music and dancing. At times stray figures swept past him, pausing here and there to gaze at the strange, handsome young man, who walked slowly onward, half oblivious to the life and movement around him.

He was almost away from the Lighted Way when, glancing up at a window, a pale face with a background of golden hair riveted his attention. Something in the look of the girl's blue eyes puzzled him and he drew nearer. He was in the shadow. Wholly unconscious of him, her chin resting on her hand, she gazed out into the lighted street, a peculiar, searching look in her eyes—a look as though she were searching for something she was never on earth to find. The girl was very attractive. The soft curves of the snow-white neck, and the exquisite grace of the golden head bent over suggested a flowering lily on its stem. But she was in trouble—he could see that. Perhaps—but it was useless to speculate. He saw the hot tears trickle down her cheeks—a handkerchief raised to her eyes. In another moment a stern, siren face appeared beside hers and both disappeared.

Tired, weary, saddened, he turned about quickly, walking swiftly that he might the sooner get away.

Reaching the hotel, he went to his room at

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once. The place was not altogether inviting. At any rate, he reflected, he would only have to stay one night there. To-morrow he would take his trunk to his new home.

In the hall-way he met the elder of the Flush Youths, making his way unsteadily. Through the open door of their room he saw the other stretched across the bed, sound asleep, but still fully dressed. They seemed to be learning very fast.

The night was warm, the frame hotel was hot and stuffy, and attempt as he would, he could not get to sleep, and as he lay there, tossing to and fro, the covers in disarray, his mind swept over the strange and varied happenings of the day.

First it was the long, weary stage ride in the sweltering heat, and the thirst-quenching streams so far apart as they climbed the summit. Vividly he remembered how the horses had tugged and panted as they struggled on, tired and weary. The happenings around the road-house, the meeting with Eula Lorimer, the drive down the hill and the runaway occupied him longer. The mystery of the girl baffled him. She was of the hills, the mountains; and yet not of them. From where had come the other world's intimate touch? Other scenes crowded in, but the tardy thought lingered over the memory

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of her look, her way, her smile. And then—the afterward, the body slipping over the dash, the little group at the bridge, the woman and her child—and yes, once more it was the mountain girl. He wondered when he would see her again.

A strange mood seized him. He jumped out of bed, went to the window, raised it, leaned out, letting the soft night wind brush past him with its gentle, cooling touch. It was on past midnight, but there was still much stir in the town. In the saloon across the street the roulette wheels whirled and whizzed incessantly. Groups sat around the card-tables, an ace and a king moving here, a queen and a spade there. In the street below, gay figures passed and repassed, looking for some new adventure.

He fell into a reverie, wondering at the good or ill fortune that had brought him to the metropolis of this wild, new camp. Again he speculated upon the future—the chances, the opportunities that lay before him in this land of promise and resource. And he was wise enough to recognize that it was a land of temptation, too.

Suddenly there burst in upon his reverie the sound of a woman's smothered weeping. He

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listened intently. He could hear it very distinctly—the stifled, smothered sobs. He fancied that it must be in the next room. Then there was stillness. He held his breath—waiting for the slightest sound. There was almost silence for a full thirty seconds when, with a great gasping sob, the outbreak was renewed. The flood of feeling swept through all barriers—all attempts to stifle. It seemed as though she had buried herself in the bed-clothes in order to keep back the sound of her moaning, and had found herself helpless amid the storm of her grief. Hist!—she was moving. There was a rustle of clothing, a swish of night garments, and then the patter of bare feet on the carpeted floor. She was talking wildly—pouring out her heart-break—her great sorrow. Then a figure appeared opposite him—gleaming white in the dead gloom of the night. He drew behind the curtain, watching guardedly. She was leaning out over the window ledge now.

Elbows on the ledge, she held her head in her hands, her long, dark hair falling in waves around her. She became quieter. It was getting very late, and the cooler night air seemed to soothe her. As the minutes passed, she became quieter still. At the end of a quarter of an hour she had become ominously so.

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The night had become very calm and everything was now quite still. Not a breath of air was stirring. She listened intently—somehow, he knew that she was listening. And after a time, he heard it, too—the faintest, sweetest, most peaceful, silvery ripple. She looked in that direction. Not understanding, he wondered that such a little thing could so take her attention. And it was such a very little thing.

For away down on the peaceful river the water was washing, waving, rippling.

Back in the room he could hear a light rustling. Then came the patter of little feet, and at the window the nestling of a baby form against the parent breast. It was the sign for a fresh outburst. A great sob burst through—shook her. The head bent lower—the elbows loosened. Her hands dropped down and clasped across the window sill. With a long-drawn, gasping sigh, the troubled head, with its wealth of tumbled dark hair, drooped lower, finally, pillowing itself on her trembling, white arms.

Godfrey drew back. It was plain that this was no ordinary grief.

“Oh, Jim!” she moaned piteously. “Oh, Jim!”

He understood who she was now.

Little Lelia cried out her wealth of dear

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mammy names, but the mother paid no attention.

"Oh, mamsey!" she begged, sobbing, "where is he?—where is Daddy Jim!"

She was in such a frenzy that at first she would have nothing to do with the child, but Lelia began to call so loudly that if she had not taken her in her arms, she would have awakened the whole house. She took her up, forgetting her sorrow for the moment in the mission of quieting the child. In a few minutes the little girl was fast asleep. Then she laid her down on the bed, while she crept back to the window, and pillowed her head upon her arms once more.

And away down upon the peaceful river the water was washing, waving, rippling.

Amid his interest in what the outcome might be, Godfrey heard it, and instinct told him that she heard it, too. Warned, he was going to turn about and dress, when with the suddenness of a thunderbolt, there came a fresh outburst.

"Oh, God!" she groaned. "I can't go on living—I can't—I can't live without Jim."

It may be that out of the Dim Unseen a challenge was flung back, but in her crazed mental state clear thinking was impossible.

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Then she became quieter again, and he could distinctly hear that steady, unchecked flow that goes on for ever.

For away down on the peaceful river, the water washed, waved, rippled.

She made another exclamation, and there was such a terrible finality about her words that he could no longer doubt. Something must be done.

While he dressed hurriedly he heard a swift movement in her room—the rustle of garments. The door opened. He looked out—a figure went down the stair. He ran to the window. He saw her pass down the street. He finished dressing quickly and rushed out with a bound. Instinct must have whispered that she was followed, for she turned an obscure corner and threw him off the track.

* * * * *

An hour later a serious group were gathered in the hotel lobby. They were very quiet. A hush had fallen upon them. It was as though they were gazing into the mysteries of another world. Death had come to the Crossing. Suffering and Pain had not forewarned. And in one day passports had been left for two.

CHAPTER VII

LITTLE LELIA AND DADDY JIM

GODFREY EMMETT and Bruce Jimmy were standing a little apart from the rest. Emmett was talking earnestly.

"Too bad you did not realize sooner," commented the prospector. "Her trouble must have unsettled her reason. That appears to be clear."

"I agree."

"And if she hadn't lain down in the shallow water she would be alive now. If we had only looked there first."

"Once more I agree," said the other, nodding, "but it was natural to think that the deep water would have been the place."

"The little girl—what will become of her? I wonder if she is asleep still?"

"Let us go up and see," returned Emmett, and together they went up the stair.

The door was slightly ajar, and as they entered

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they could hear the calm, even breathing of the child. Closing the door, they waited a moment. They felt like guilty intruders; and they knew not what to do. Bruce Jimmy was afraid they might waken her, but still they stayed. A late moon had risen, and in the reflection of its pale light they could clearly distinguish the features of the child. The lips fluttered, an arm swung around, and she began to talk in her sleep.

"Oh, mammy, I want daddy—I want Daddy Jim."

It was evident that she had slept through it all—she was ignorant of what had happened. *She did not know.*

"Come away," commanded Bruce Jimmy hoarsely. "We've got to think."

They were about to go when a quick movement made them halt sharply. Lelia, still asleep, was getting out of bed.

They drew back into the shadow of the room, with softened footfall, fearing that the slightest sound or the brushing of her nightgown against them might awaken her, and in so doing, throw her into a state of fear and fright nothing short of hysterics.

She first went to a table in the corner of the room and picked up a photo. With that clasped

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tightly in her hands, she turned to the door. They followed at once, watching her closely. She had no sooner got into the hallway than she dropped the photo, and unconscious of her loss she passed on. Emmett followed her down the stairs.

Bruce Jimmy picked up the photo and held it close to a sputtering kerosene lamp in the hallway. The likeness was that of a young man of about thirty. On the back there was the following inscription :

“ To my darling Lelia,

“ From her loving daddy,

“ JIM.”

Quick as thought Bruce Jimmy realized that, barring his whiskers, the man in the photo was a replica of himself. When Dolson had been on the stage he had often noted the striking resemblance, even though the features were marred by excesses and dissipation. A wild idea whizzed through his brain, startling in its suddenness. He was lonely—had no one to love him. He could—but no—and then—yes, he might try—why should he not ? She would never know until long after he had made her love him, and then it would no longer matter.

LITTLE LELIA AND DADDY JIM

But there was no time to be lost. Rushing to his room he opened up his shaving outfit and went to work. And while he worked he sighed and smiled by turns, one minute thinking of the possible brightness of the future, and in the other reflecting on the starved loneliness of his barren life.

Meanwhile, Lelia, with Godfrey following close behind, had reached the bottom of the stair. The group in the lobby, at first surprised, and then astonished, fell back, allowing her to pass through. She tried the front door, but Godfrey reached over above her head and held it shut. He had no desire to awaken her just yet, but he could not let her go out. She tugged at the latch, then jerked impatiently, when her hold slipped, and she would have fallen on the floor if Godfrey had not caught her in his arms. The shock awoke her. As he tried to soothe her she called loudly for her mother. And who had taken her out of bed?

Godfrey looked about him helplessly. What was he to do? If there were only a woman about. She might have pacified her—at least, she would have known what was best to do. But at this hour there were no women around. He looked at the men, but no one offered—they

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were as helpless as he. A widower with experience offered a hint—he had done it many a night. And so he began to walk the floor with Lelia in his arms, endeavouring to soothe, to hush her into quiet, to keep back her pitiful cries.

First it was her mother she wanted. “I want mammy,” she repeated over and over. He assured her that they would see about her mammy by and by. Then she called for her father once more. This continued for several minutes when the weary eyelids drooped and closed. She had lapsed into comparative quiet when in a distinct, emphatic, but in every sense a plaintive baby voice, she called :

“I want daddy—mammy promised—oh, I want Daddy Jim.”

The heart appeal in her piping baby voice brought tears to the eyes of almost every man in the room. At that time there were few baby girls in the Crossing, and for each one there was a dozen worshippers. Rough-and-ready men of the hills they were, but they had hearts like the inside of a house with open fire and burning grate. They could stand a good deal, but this was a little too much. And they were all so helpless. Gold in their pockets and gold in the hills; but that was nothing. This was a situation where gold would not buy.

LITTLE LELIA AND DADDY JIM

But even as she had spoken, and while they were thinking, a strange face appeared at the foot of the stair. And yet not strange, either, although it was a moment before they could distinguish clearly. It was only afterwards that they understood.

At first it was rather embarrassing to Bruce Jimmy to find that she paid no attention. He came over to her, clumsily chucked her under the chin, tickled her little body, and with a look of appeal in his eyes that nobody but Godfrey understood he took her up in his arms.

"I want daddy," she cried lustily. "I want Daddy Jim."

"But here I am at last—your Daddy Jim—my love—I—I—Yes—I'm your Daddy Jim."

He knew that he was saying it awkwardly, but it appeared as though she sensed, even dimly, that something was happening—something which was going to make her life in future very different from anything that it had been in the past. And she had always dreamed that finding Daddy Jim would do that. He clasped her against his breast, and kissed her lips, her cheeks—her soft, curly hair.

But she was not easily convinced. She put her little hands against his breast, pushing

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herself back from him, in order that she might see his face.

For one long moment she looked into his eyes, her doubt holding her back.

Without his beard Bruce Jimmy was a very good-looking man. And the thought of what was happening and might happen had transformed him. Already his face shone and his eyes were bright and soft.

And still Lelia hesitated. It was all so sudden—so strange—so different from what she dreamed. It did not seem as though this was the way it should have come about. Mammy should have held her, and then daddy would have come and clasped them both. But he had said that they would see where mammy was—and well, he was here—and even if it didn't seem just right, he was her daddy, and he had kissed her—and yes, he was her daddy, he had said he was.

A babe loves easily, and gradually the man conquered—this strange man who had been so suddenly transformed. She leaned over to him in a mute surrender. He clasped her tighter and kissed the pale, tear-stained cheeks.

CHAPTER VIII

A DAY IN THE HILLS

THE beauty of the August afternoon had lured the young man out into the great outdoors—the beautiful wide spaces of nature which seemed to him more wonderful in the mountain country than anywhere else. Here and there a few wild flowers lifted their golden and browned heads above the ripened bunch grass of the mountainside. The day was warm, with a slight breeze stirring—hardly noticeable unless you watched the smoke from flame.

In the valley below the surveyors had set out their stakes nine months before, and now the contractors were hard at work on the railway grade. On a projecting spur New York and Boston men were constructing a million-dollar smelter of a distinctly modern type. One hundred yards down the mountain was the shaft house of the Golden Dog. On the opposite side of the river the plant and buildings of the

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Buckhorn and the Golconda dotted the horizon, the curling smoke, the roar of the blasting and the rumble of the great plant, a constant reminder of the new world of machinery and men that had come to grind out dividends for the holders of engraved paper who lived in castles of brick and stone in the land beyond the ridges.

At a bend in the road above the Gypsy fraction, he turned about, looking out across the Valley towards the zig-zag of switchbacks down which he had taken that memorable ride. The whole scene came back to him in a moment. He heard the crack of the whip, saw the plunging of the wild horses, and more than all recalled the pale face and the beauty and courage of the mountain girl who had sat by his side. After a time the vision became less clear—other thoughts crowded in. He wondered if—and he stopped himself. It was idle to dream like that.

He had intended to go no farther than the fraction, but his moods of deep introspection had the habit of generating an emotion that was neither easy to control nor conceal. He bent his head, patted the neck of the pony, whispered a familiar word, and turned it up the hills.

The truth of the matter was that the old trouble was upon him, and he hoped that the

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exhilarating air, the scent of the woods, the buoyant atmosphere of the mountains—the aroma of the fir, the pine, the tamarac—would stifle the craving that he knew he must not satisfy. But he was aware that the struggle would be no easy one. Past experiences had taught him that it was no small matter to meet the challenge of an unruly throat.

As he reached the crest of a narrow, level plateau of several acres he came upon Bruce Jimmy, sitting in front of his cabin, smoking. He had left town a few days before, having given Lelia into the charge of a nurse for the time.

“How far is it to Lorimers’?” Godfrey queried.

“Three miles.”

“Straight up the trail?”

“No. Take the right-hand road at the next turn. The other fork runs to the Sheep Ranch. You can’t miss it. You’ll see the track. Pete Turpin went up that way to-day.”

“Pete Turpin?”

“Yes. Is it possible that you have been in the Crossing for more than a month and have not heard of Pete Turpin?”

“Let’s see. He runs the Alhambra, doesn’t he?”

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"Sure he does. And the nice devil's-nest it is."

"Rank, eh?"

"Yes, sir. Nothing to equal it this side of the Old Man's All-Night Joint at Spokane Falls. He fills them up on dopey gin and then rolls them over. He's added a new skirt section, they say, too."

"A what?"

"Women, a dance hall, and——"

Godfrey shrugged. He did not care for these details.

"What would he be doing up this way?" Godfrey smiled to himself at the uselessness of the question. What difference did it make to him?

"He might be wanting to see Jack Lorimer," Jimmy replied. "Years and years ago Jack and him were partners. I fancy that Jack has never been able to shake him off entirely, and that they are partners in some claims yet."

"They've made a few turns, I suppose."

"Yes, a few. They made a good one a number of years ago. Jack put his money back into the ground, while Pete put his into buze joints and gambling dens in one town and another, and is making money by the pot."

"And Lorimer?"

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“He has a few claims—but about broke—as usual.”

“Are any of the claims promising?”

“How do I know? They’re all good and they’re not. You can’t tell until you see the report of the assay, and there are so many crooks weighing gold that like as not you know little about it then. One fellow used to take the rock, throw it into the back yard, and write out a fine report. I fancy that the Silver Cloud is the best claim that Lorimer has, but he is badly cramped for funds. I think that Turpin is putting up the money for development work, and if it turns out well, Lorimer may get on his feet again. But he’s really hard up now.”

Godfrey was about to go on when Bruce Jimmy made a remark about the fineness of the weather in general and that day in particular. He acquiesced, but did not disclose what he felt. The mood was still upon him. There was something about this bright August day which affected him tremendously. Below them the Crossing was still in sight.

“Simply grand,” asserted Bruce Jimmy, with enthusiasm. “On a day like this I fall in love with the mountains all over again.”

“It is very beautiful,” repeated Godfrey, softly, but he looked down towards the town.

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“That is—the part the Creator made,” specialized the prospector. He had noted the direction of the young man’s look.

Emmett’s glance told that he did not understand, but Bruce Jimmy did not leave him in any doubt as to his meaning. With quick, short ejaculations he made it all clear. And as Godfrey looked again the beauty seemed crowded out—he saw naught but the Crossing as the prospector had painted it—the scene of a thousand revelries, the carnival ground of the tin-horn leech, the haunt of skirted sleuths who reclined in languorous ease behind clinging tapestries and crimson illuminations, their orgies a stinking in the nostrils of the Puritan, and the pleasures of all greater and wilder on the Rest Day, when those who worship wend their way to the waiting pew and the parson thunders against the iniquities of a modern Sodom, or discourses upon the feebleness of the crumbling walls of clay and the Immortality of the Soul.

“It is the old story,” concluded the prospector, as Godfrey moved away. “God made the country, but the devil made the town.”

Although he could not have claimed any special objective point when leaving the Crossing, Godfrey determined to go on as far as the Lorimers’.

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After a half-hour's easy riding he came to a spot which he knew must be the place. The windows of the hewed fir house were neatly trimmed and painted. Rose vines and sweet peas twined around porch and doorway, while about the whole there was an air—an atmosphere of domesticity unusual in the mountains. Surely, thought he, a woman must live at such a place as this ?

He was hardly through the gate when a soft voice greeted him from behind. Eula was returning from a mid-afternoon canter on the roan pony.

"I was beginning to think that you had forgotten," she said, half reproachfully. "Besides, my mountains are not nearly so pretty now."

"I never forget," he told her, "and your mountains—how have they changed ?"

"Every way—very much. They were in June garb then. They are in August garb now—a hot, burnt August, with fevered burning days to come. Then the grass was green, succulent. Now it is burnt, dry, dead. Shall we go into the house ? Really, Mr. Emmett—you look so funny. Haven't you been listening at all ?"

"I realize now that I should have come sooner. Does that satisfy you with regard to my interest ?" They started towards the house.

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He was glad that it had passed over so lightly. He had been too much occupied with the picture of the girl in the glistening sunlight. She was wearing a huge summer hat, trimmed with a wide ribbon. Then had dropped over on her shoulder, the knotted ribbon which held it pressed tightly against her throat. The rippling brown hair was exposed to the sun-rays. She had on a plain brown riding dress, the neck cut low, the sleeves abbreviated—the arms bare. Fresh from her ride, she was the personification of life and health, her cheeks aglow, her eyes bright.

At the end of the walk she permitted him to unsaddle her pony, and sent the equine scampering to the pasture lot. Sitting on wicker chairs on the porch they talked freely until her father came. That gentleman rounded the corner of the house as Eula was fastening a late blooming rose to the lapel of Godfrey's coat. He seemed a little startled at the vision he beheld, then recovered himself and came on.

How much the daughter worshipped the father was shown in the look she gave him. A tall, erect figure, he was a good-looking man still, and must have been a very handsome man in his youth.

"Daddy," she said, smiling, "this is Mr. Emmett."

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The warmth of the older man's handshake could not leave the younger in any doubt about his welcome. Lorimer affirmed that he had been wanting to see him ever since the night of the runaway. Then he began to tell things, although Eula interposed with finger raised. He was saying too much, she was sure. Godfrey felt certain that what he had accomplished was nothing, and assured the prospector that what had been done was in reality due to his daughter's knowledge of horsemanship. This gave the fond father an opening, what he felt shining in his eyes.

"I reckon that she knows more about horses and ponies than common," he answered proudly. "Up here life is not livin' without a few ponies, and she's always had them. Mr. Emmett," he drawled, as he scrutinized the young man closely, "you look sort of tuckered out. Won't you have a drink?"

The invitation was disconcerting, and he did not seem to be able to find the spirit to refuse. The wine was refreshing, but he took no more than a few sips, a fact overlooked by the father as he talked on, but noted particularly by the girl.

For an hour the two men discussed current events, Eula delighted and silent, pleased that her father, so much alone, had found some one to talk to. At the beginning it was the newest

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phase of mining litigation emphasized by the Fulton case, and at the end it was the merits and the demerits of the new sky-pilot who had just struck camp—a subject that has been fruitful of discussion ever since time began. Lorimer, who was an old-timer to the backbone, with deep-seated prejudices in many ways, was sure that he was all right. He had seen him walk up with the others and take his drink like a man.*

* This reference, and another further on, are based on an incident in early Kootenay history. Following the first boom after the finding of the Silver King and the rich Slocan properties, there was a distinct reaction. Old-timers averred that the hard times were coincident with the arrival of sky-pilots. Consequently, when a young student appeared at a backwoods camp one afternoon, desiring to hold a service, he encountered a peculiar situation. The only available place was a saloon, and although the owner was willing, the "boys of the hills" were not by any means unanimous as to the advisability of permitting the service at all. If preachers kept on getting so numerous, times would get worse instead of better.

To settle the matter a meeting was called, a chairman was appointed, and the situation was discussed at length. The majority held to one opinion: that the camp was getting too much civilized; and that sky-pilots should be barred.

Just at this stage a battle-scarred old veteran of the hill country secured the floor and turned the tables for the preacher.

"Boys," he remarked, impressively, "I move that we allow this young kid to do his bit of preachin'. He's all right. I'll vouch for him. I saw him walk up to the bar and take his drink like a man."

Without any more discussion the service was proceeded with at once.

In reality, the joke was on the old-timer, who would never take a mixed drink. The young man had been drinking lemonade.

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Then he excused himself, said that he had an errand to the mine, and the young people were alone together. Eula led the way into the sitting-room and here Godfrey found himself gazing pensively at the portrait of a young woman, bordered with an antique gilt frame. He noted the broad brow, the grey eyes with the brooding, dreamy questioning, and the oval face so like that of the girl who stood by his side.

"Your mother?" he said.

"Yes," she replied softly, "one of the saints of this world when she was here, and one of the other now that she has gone. She sleeps—let me show you," and she led the way to the window. She pointed toward a towering pine beneath which all that was mortal of her mother had rested for the six years since she had passed over. Under the pine was a tall figure with bowed head.

"He goes there every day," explained the girl. "He will not get to the mine for an hour now. Sometimes he talks of her as though she might appear in the room at any moment. He cannot forget."

They spent an hour in the corner near the bookshelves. Eula Lorimer was the proud possessor of a well-selected library, part of it a dowry from her mother. The books were of the kind that you read and re-read, the best that

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men and women have written in the days that are past and gone, with a smattering of the most serious of modern works. Godfrey was more or less of a book-lover, but he found that he had to take second place beside the wider experiences of this girl. She had read dozens of masterpieces that he had not found time to scan. But it was delightful to find that in some cases they liked the same author or held the same book to be a favourite. Thumbing over Mrs. Browning's sonnets he found the pages marked—the margins annotated.

"It would just be like her," he thought to himself," this intense young woman—to love stuff like that."

Supper over, they raced to the top of Copper Bald to see the last fiery rays of the setting sun drop down behind the rugged outline of tree and rock and sky. Sitting side by side on a granite ledge, they watched the glowing crimson orb descend lower and lower. Down below them was the clearing surrounding the cabin and the Sheep Ranch. In the garden they could see the shepherd moving slowly about—a lone, pathetic figure.

"Strange," remarked Godfrey, when she had told him the story.

A hermit—a misogynist—had come from no

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one knew where, and never went to town when he could avoid it. Lived by selling wool and fat wethers. No one knew his real name—everywhere he was known as the Shepherd. In the springtime he had been known to walk miles over the mountains to bring back a stray lamb.

“Although the Shepherd has such a reputation for avoiding women, we get on splendidly,” explained Eula. “Whenever I have the blues, or find that I am depressed, I saddle the roan and run down to see him. He does not say very much—just talks quietly, but I come away feeling refreshed—as though I had been drinking at a fountain. He seems to affect people like that.”

“I’d like to meet him,” said Godfrey. “Some day I will.”

The sun lowered, but they had not moved. It would be both difficult and useless to set down all they talked about. Twilight gathered and deepened and still they talked on. Not a minute dragged. If there was silence for a time it was but another way of expressing an intimate understanding. Eula tried to fathom its significance and failed. And yet away back somewhere she seemed to hear the soft clanging of an affirmative click.

When they finally started for home Eula recognized that it seemed as though she had

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always known this young man whom she had never known. And what troubled her most was that there lay close to her heart a letter from a young man whom she had always known, but who seemed to her now as much a thing apart from her life as a Polish exile in Siberia.

When they reached the house the sitting-room was filled with company—a group of lively young miners employed on the Silver Cloud. It was their custom to drop in on a Sunday evening, and, as usual, they expected music. Eula opened up the old melodeon, led off, and the room rang with the melody of an old favourite.

And when they had tired of music Godfrey drew them into conversation. He found a common ground—asked a host of questions about shafts and leads and veins. He let himself go and within an hour had captured the company. One seeing him amid this group would not find it hard to understand that he had been the favourite at the Good Fellows' Inn.

When it came to say good-night, Eula's hand, given in parting was steady, her voice was calm, but her heart was pounding. The prospector got the young man his horse, saw him to the gate, insisted that he should come again soon, and then stood leaning over the closed gate a long time, thinking.

CHAPTER IX

HEART TO HEART

EULA LORIMER was the one animate creation of a great first love in its fiery, flame-tinted youth. That which had drawn John Lorimer and Charlotte Shuyler together had been one of those strange, intense passions that sometimes occur, natural as rainfall, spontaneous as baby laughter, enduring as the firm-seated mountains. The Shuylers were a wealthy New England family, but Charlotte had set little store by the things that were showered upon her. A magnificent, compelling, untamed creature, she had grown up a family mystery. No one understood her. Moods of deep melancholy were followed by wonderful periods of an unwarranted buoyancy. She was happy or mournful without apparent cause.

Her grandmother, and Eula's great-grandmother, Betsey Shuyler, a handsome woman with a deep, passionate nature, capable of either a

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great love or intense hatred, had suffered much as a result of the tragic ending of an early affair. That the fault was her own only increased her suffering. After a bitter quarrel with her lover, because she had somewhat coquettishly given a rival temporary encouragement, she became engaged to the aristocratic Frederick Shuyler, who, in a romantic moment, had fallen in love with her. A month later her lover pleaded for a quiet, sane consideration of what had come between them, but she refused angrily. She recognized that she loved him still, but was determined to stamp it out. He left her with a warning that the time would come when she would regret her action—her terrible haste. He sailed for South America the week following, and she never saw him again. Two years later word came that he had died of fever.

By this time she had been married to Frederick Shuyler for over a year, and had learned the meaning of disillusionment. In no way were they suited to each other, and after repeated attempts at adaptation she drew back into seclusion. But at certain periods the love that she had stamped upon and crushed displayed a marvellous vitality. Again and again it reared its head like that of some jungle flower which springs up quickly and roots deep. In expiation,

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she spent a goodly part of her declining years in writing a diary where she laid bare her secret passion for the dead lover of her departed youth.

By a strange habit of nature, the fruits of which we see occasionally, the tendencies that did not die with her skipped a generation. But in the last of the grandchildren, Charlotte, the atavism was made manifest.

She was twenty before she found the mate for the Great Adventure. From the first neither had much doubt about the finality of the thing that had happened to them. Both resisted mildly, and then, when the truth was clear, surrendered absolutely. But a new difficulty arose. John Lorimer was ambitious, a strong man for any woman, but was hampered by the handicap of limited means. The parents shook their heads at first, and then said "No" positively. Late one May night a rope ladder hung from a window, did its fateful work, and that was the end.

Or, rather, it was the beginning. They trekked to western goldfields, and because she had found the one man in all the world who was wholly suited to her, she was supremely happy. From the beginning he was fairly successful, but not selfishly so. Wife and home were a vital part of his life, and never excluded.

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She went with him everywhere. During the summer they would make their home in the largest town of the camp where he would happen to be operating, and in the winter what might have been monotony had been relieved by his contriving to arrange that some promotion mission would take him to the banking and financial centres of the East. On one occasion Charlotte had asked for permission to visit her parents in their declining years. The mother urged her to come, but the father ignored her letter. Her pride was hurt and she did not go.

After many years of success John Lorimer made a big plunge with a prospect where the much-sought gold was hidden, or supposed to be hidden, beneath an aggravating pile of country rock. For some strange reason the treasure eluded successful pursuit, and in the years that followed the winter trips to the centre of the great world beyond the ridges were few and far between.

Another substantial success came in the first flush of the Kootenay boom. Charlotte wisely advised the purchase of high-class securities, and that future operations should be of a less speculative character. Eula would soon be ready for college and they had enough. Why should he not take things easier? He begged

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for two years more, and as she had never learned to refuse him anything, he had his way.

He tried a copper property this time. Evidently there was ore in great quantity, but it was very low grade. Profits depended on three things: the early building of a railway, economical reduction, and a fair price for copper. The outlook seemed good, and he invested the major portion of his capital in development work. The railway did not materialize at the time, although it came later. The world's consumption of copper fell off, and the Money Kings quarrelled about their share of the profits in some huge manipulations. Like a bolt from the blue the price fell, and even the best of copper prospects became wholly unsaleable. Lorimer found himself very heavily involved, and he lost all. The shock, coupled with some physical complications, was too much for the woman who had lived and loved so intensely. In the first warm flush of a bright May morning she passed away in her husband's arms.

This had been six years before, and although better fortune had returned in a measure, the other wound was still unhealed. As changes in the weather sometimes have an effect upon an amputated limb, so there were periods when

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the pain was intense. The union had been so close, so complete that it was almost as though a part of him had been wrenched away. In thought he would live in the past again, and without warning the memory of what he had lost would come back to him with a rush. This beautiful August night was one of these times.

Eula, seeing him standing there, walked down to the gate, threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. She knew what was happening, and felt almost as though she were disturbing something sacred. But he responded at once, although in silence, kissed her on cheek and lips, and together they walked over to the grassy mound beneath the pines, their silence eloquent with all the things they did not say.

"Daddy," she began, after a long spell of quiet and the silence had become unbearable, "you must do something—I must rouse you—you must not brood over this so much."

"My dear," he whispered, as he leaned over and kissed her again, "I am afraid that you do not understand. There was something about it which comes but once in a lifetime, and then only to the few."

"But, Daddy——?"

"Yes, darling, I know—but——"

There was silence on the way back to the house,

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Once back in the sitting-room, her father dropped into the big rocker, while she sat on the broad arm of the chair, leaning on his shoulder, one arm curled around his neck. Both knew the symptoms. This meant a long heart-to-heart talk.

"Daddy," she whispered, after a time, "I had a letter from Dick the other day."

"Oh!"

"Yes, and I don't know what to think about it. It's not really so much what he says, as what his peculiar words suggest, and what I feel. He used to seem so near—but now—I don't know—I can't tell. He just seems like a person I don't know at all."

"What has he done?"

"That's just it, Daddy. He really hasn't done anything—I can't hardly explain—it's something that I feel—a strange premonition of something about to happen. The funniest part is that I don't seem to care—I am absolutely indifferent. Time was when I would have been overjoyed to see him—but now—well, I believe if he were to walk into the room I wouldn't care at all. We seem to be growing apart somehow—I don't know—I can't tell."

"But he may be playful only—you don't think that he has really changed."

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"I can't say that, Daddy. I don't know. But often I wonder if—oh, I don't know—but I don't seem to be sure of myself—and he has been away so long—and my girlish promise was made so long ago. I had a queer feeling at the time, but you seemed to think that it was all right, and a girl can't always be expected to know her mind at seventeen, can she?"

The father did not answer at once. He had often had misgivings himself. At the time it had seemed quite natural. Dick and Eula had grown up together. They had seldom been apart. Years back in the past Pete and he had planned an inter-family alliance. They had been like brothers until then. But the woman Pete loved had married another, and he had grown to be a hard man. The one big human interest of his life had been the younger brother. To him he had been father and protector since the death of their mother. Dick was five years Eula's senior, and in their dream it was only natural that he should have come to fill the place of the son Pete did not have. Just before Dick had left for college it had been settled. Eula had worn the ring for a time, but of late it had been on her finger but seldom.

He wondered how long this new feeling had been growing. Had she ever been really

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awakened? Great Guns! And suppose that she had not? Then it was to come. Remembering her mother he feared a little. To the daughter of such a union as theirs he knew just how much a real awakening might mean. He put a query.

“What am I going to do, Daddy? What a question for me to answer all in a minute. Really, I don’t know. I only know what I feel. Oh, I can’t tell, but I am in such a strange mood—something is going to happen—perhaps is happening. I feel as if there were something coming along that would shake me all to pieces.”

CHAPTER X

CUPID, THE NURSE AND THE PROSPECTOR

EMMETT sat at his desk in the law office, the sunshine streaming in through the southern window. He was a very different being from the world-weary young man who had strode up and down in front of the road-house of Arizona John a little more than a month before. His movements were quick, the eye was bright, the figure alert, the face lighted up, and his whole attitude suggested a man with a deep and vital interest in life, in love with his job and with life itself. The world was a very good place and he was glad to have a corner in it.

He was rapidly getting initiated into the work that was falling to his lot as assistant in the office of Samuel M. Maylor. On this morning an old lady, travelling without escort, and desirous of finding out something of the paper mines that she had paid good money for, came

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in with a query as to whether or not the legal business of the Kootenay Western Bonanza Gold Company was transacted through that office. This was the second inquiry of the same kind in two days, and Godfrey was ready. When she was told that no such company had ever been heard of in the Crossing, and in all probability had never existed except on paper, she began a tirade that lasted for half an hour, and finally went out with her handkerchief to her eyes. A big, selfish-looking man with keen dark eyes, required the transfer of a saloon that he had purchased. A promoter and a prospector wanted a lease and bond on a promising prospect drawn without delay.

There was a lull for a moment. Godfrey stepped into the outer office. A client was waiting—had waited for half an hour to see Mr. Maylor. Godfrey volunteered his services, but the man wanted to see Maylor personally—emphasis on the word. In the interim Godfrey had an opportunity to size him up. He came to the conclusion on the instant that he didn't like him. He looked like a hard man. When the door opened Mr. Turpin was welcomed. That settled it. He knew his man now. A chill swept over him.

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The man was a devil. He remembered the hawk-eagle eyes and the face like chiselled rock.

"There was a wild time at the Alhambra last night," commented Maylor to Godfrey, when Turpin had gone.

"Oh ?"

"Yes, his leading singer attempted suicide. Nobody knows just how it happened, but it seems that a young fellow—a sort of combined prospector and trapper from the Big Bends—came in looking for someone. He recognized the girl as a long-lost sister. Overcome at his finding her there, she pulled a revolver from his belt, determined to make short work of it. She had fired once, and was about to fire again, when, in trying to take it from her, the thing went off, taking serious effect, killing him almost instantly. He died in a few minutes. The girl is lying in the hospital, although her wound is not serious. Turpin feels kind of cut up. He wants to see the editor, McCrossan, and try and get the thing hushed up—he is afraid of publicity. He is not a stranger to the fact that I have an interest in the paper."

"And you will——?"

"I will not."

This pleased Godfrey. He felt that he was going to like his chief.

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"But," went on Maylor, "it won't be necessary. I know McCrossan. He'll close a fat printing contract before Turpin leaves him, but no mention of this incident will appear. My interest in the paper is so small that I can do nothing. Turpin over-estimates my influence."

During the balance of the day Godfrey could not get the thing out of his head. Somebody's sister! Somebody's brother! And when Mrs. Maylor heard the story all her womanly instincts were aroused. She was sure that there was something that she could do. But Maylor only shook his head.

He went down town after dinner, and Godfrey and Mrs. Maylor were left alone. Godfrey was in a strange mood. He made an attempt to read a book but finally gave it up. He went upstairs, stepped out on the balcony and lit a cigar. He paced back and forth nervously.

Mrs. Maylor came up and they sat down on a wicker bench. He was strangely lonely—the day had depressed him—indeed, they were both lonely; and occasionally a look, a simple act, a silence that neither cared to break, an unspoken question, a wordless answer would make clear the invisible web that time and circumstance were surely spinning between him and the

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mature woman who was becoming the mother he had never had.

The twilight deepened, the stars began to come out. A sense of the coming darkness, of the world's cruelty, of human tragedy crept down upon them. Almost involuntarily her hand was laid upon his arm. She turned to him in appeal. The pent-up emotion welled up, bubbled over, and she laid her head upon his shoulder. Drawing back a moment, his eyes sought hers.

"It's not because I am the son of your girlhood friend?" he queried. She could have kissed him for putting the question.

"No and Yes," she answered quietly. "It is not a little for her, but most of all for yourself. If God had been kinder my own might have been just as you are now."

His look repaid, and she let inclination have its way and was content. Their understanding was perfect after that.

Now, it was about this time that there began that marvellous romance which was the wonder and the gossip of the Crossing for many a day.

Of course it was all very absurd and very foolish, as the most of romances are. The conventional rôle for a bachelor of forty with a taking way and a mine fortune up his sleeve

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would have been to have selected a buxom, trusting maiden of seventeen or thereabouts to be his better half and the mother of his family. The conventional rôle for a spinster who had feared to remember several past birthdays would have been to have continued the lonely, barren way of single blessedness that Fate so often decrees.

But lo! Presto! Convention never has settled with Master Cupid. And now—well—the touch of baby hands—the smile of baby lips, the love of baby eyes—a look, a glance, a touch of hands—a thumping of hearts—days of enforced companionship, and the end is as simple and as plain as the shaded end of a lighted road in the moonlight.

Just as Godfrey was about to leave the house on a bright mountain morning, a few days later, Mrs. Maylor appeared in the hallway, dressed for the street. In reply to his questioning look she very promptly told him of her mission.

“I am going to adopt that Dolson baby,” she said, frankly.

“But——?”

“Yes, I am,” she interrupted. “And I want you to take me along. I’m going to talk to Jim Ross.”

“But he may not want to give her up?”

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“Give her up. Of course he will. It’s perfectly absurd for him—man that he is—to think that he can keep her. I’ll see to that.”

They had no sooner reached the street than they perceived that something very unusual was happening on the verandah of the Nurses’ Home just a few doors away. A man and a woman were fussing over, fondling and kissing a baby girl in a most ridiculous fashion, regardless of the fact that their manœuvres could be seen from the street. One would have fancied that they had never seen a baby girl before.

“Why, it’s Bruce Jimmy,” remarked Godfrey as they came nearer.

“And Nurse Collins,” echoed his companion in the same breath.

“What can they be doing?”

“And whose child is it?”

“No doubt it is *her*—Lelia!” answered Godfrey.

As they mounted the steps, Godfrey glanced at his companion, and saw that her confident air was fast disappearing. Already she had begun to see that this thing might not be so simple.

Nurse Collins greeted them with a smile, Lelia was laughing, while Bruce Jimmy was the only one who did not seem to be pleased.

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Perhaps it was because he was the only one of the three who had realized her mission. This woman had come to take *her* away.

It may be that at first he considered the case was hopeless. Her sex gave her the greater claim.

But something in the nurse's eyes gave him courage. At the outset he did not reckon on little Lelia at all, although in the end it was baby Lelia who took her problem in her own dear little hands and settled it once, and for all.

Mrs. Maylor, after fussing and cooing over Lelia, and kissing her as often as she dared, made a bad beginning by stating her purpose very abruptly. Nurse Collins was aghast. Lelia was being very well taken care of, and she had thought—well, Mr. Ross had said that he would pay, and be responsible and——

Bruce Jimmy felt his heart thump and throb. Perhaps his dreams—for there had come a second after the first—were not so absurd and impossible of realization in spite of his doubts. Godfrey looked on complacently.

They had been discussing pros and cons for several minutes when there came one of those ominous silences which always presage either a peaceful ending or an explosion. In this case all the materials were there for either. But

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Fate was kind, or perhaps she prompted Bruce Jimmy to propose the test that settled things. Why not let Lelia decide for herself ?

Agreed, but Mrs. Maylor's consent was not given very willingly. And it was not very easy to make Lelia understand that she could stay with the nurse and Daddy—for she continually called him that—or she could go with the new lady who had hugged and kissed her.

She paused a moment, not understanding, and then walked over to Bruce Jimmy and stretched out her chubby arms.

“ And leave you, Daddy ? ”

That settled it. There could be no doubt after that. Emotion gripped him and he felt something rise up in his throat. Rather clumsily he picked her up and folded her in his arms.

“ She is mine now,” he asserted triumphantly.

“ And mine,” claimed the nurse, as she came over and kissed the soft cheeks of the babe who had found another home so soon after she had lost the other.

Bruce Jimmy looked at the nurse and their eyes met. He was getting nervous—he wished that they were alone. He knew that unless he got himself a little better in hand he would be likely to do something foolish right away.

Mrs. Maylor, taking her defeat bravely, assured

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them that Lelia's choice was the most beautiful thing that she had ever seen. Motioning to Godfrey, they started away. It was getting very plain to them both. No one was needed any more now.

And so it happened that although it is written in the tragic annals of Crossing history that Lelia Ross, once Dolson, lost a father and a mother on her first day in the camp, it is also written that she found not only a father and a mother, but brought two hearts and lives together that might, otherwise, have always remained asunder.

CHAPTER XI

THE SHEPHERD

SUNDAY morning Godfrey rode out into the hills and found no one to welcome him at Pine Ridge. The place looked deserted. He noticed there was some smoke curling from the Silver Cloud stack, sure sign of activity on any other day, but he chose to turn the pony's head up the trail leading to the Sheep Ranch.

He crossed the low summit, dropped down on the farther side, and as he neared the clearing he noticed the Shepherd walking about in the garden. Looking up, the Shepherd took note of his coming, and walked to the gate to meet him.

The Shepherd was a man of apparently between fifty and sixty years of age, and with his long, greyish beard, presented a somewhat venerable appearance. There was a stoop to the broad shoulders, but his eyes flashed like fire. They also mirrored just the slightest semblance of a reserve which might have suggested to the close

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observer that before the heart and life of the man had been thrust into the crucible of suffering—for everything, his whole demeanour, surroundings and the manner of his living told of a period when his previous life had been torn up by the roots—those blue eyes had likely glistened and glowed with pride.

It might have been the Pride of Place already won. Perhaps it had been the Pride of Place that was being won. But one thing was very clear—those bent shoulders told that there was little of Pride about the Shepherd now. And people said that when the Shepherd looked at you he looked afar—into the further distance, yes, even into the Further Beyond.

“I knew you were coming,” said the Shepherd, after the first greetings were over.

“Knew I was coming?” exclaimed Godfrey, in astonishment.

“Yes.”

“But—what?—how?—until a few minutes ago I did not know myself. And even now I do not know why I came.”

“Just so—I don’t know—can hardly explain exactly. It seems to me that some time we will know more about this than we do now. Strange powers are given to those who live out in the open—close to nature and the soil. Some way—

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somehow your brain got in touch with mine. Don't smile—why should it not be so? Is it more wonderful than the wireless telegraphy the world will have one day? I think not. More than that, young man—I know your malady.”

The Shepherd leaned over and whispered in his ear. Astounded, Godfrey did not smile after that.

“And the cure—the remedy?—perhaps you will tell me that also?”

“Persistence, battle, and this!” The Shepherd waved his arm towards the great outdoors—the mountains—companions of the world-weary since time began. “You may use the first two methods, but there will still be periods when you will come out into the hills. It is that instinct which leads you now. You want to get away from the world and you are right. I found it to be bad, rotten, vile. It preaches Christ, proclaims to follow Him, and serves Mammon continually. Corruption sits in the chair of authority in high places. A veneered purity masks in the robes of virtue while wearing the undergarments of lust. And so I came away from it all—the shallowness and the rottenness and the vileness—and remain in peace and quiet here. To you I would say do the same—at the same time knowing that you will not do it—at least not until the last. But you will have to

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fight. Weak men drift, but strong men either win or die. And one day you will come—will find the victory. Grant that it may not be too late.”

Godfrey was silent. He knew not if he was to take the Shepherd seriously.

“Won’t you stay for dinner?” added the Shepherd.

Godfrey declined the invitation and turned away. The Shepherd was lonely and seemed loth to see him go.

“You will come again?” he said.

Godfrey nodded, promised, mounted the pony, and rode past the paddock up the hill. At the end of the grade he turned about, looking back to where the Shepherd was still standing by the bars. He waved his hand and the Shepherd waved in reply.

“I believe that I am going to like him,” he ruminated to himself. “I’ll guarantee he has a history. Poor, lonely old man! I’ll have to go and see him again. I wish that I had stopped for dinner.”

When he reached Pine Ridge he met the foreman of the Silver Cloud.

“Where are the Lorimers?” he inquired.

“Why, haven’t you heard?” returned the other. “Eula—the brown pony threw her, and Jim took her down to the hospital. Badly bruised—but no more than that.”

CHAPTER XII

MAISIE GRAY

THE hospital was some distance to the north of the Crossing, and close to the river. Between it and the river was a scattered growth of cottonwood. As Godfrey walked through the outer gate late that afternoon his attention was arrested by a girl rushing out of a rear door. A minute later he saw a white figure amid the cottonwood. The girl was running to the river with the speed of a frightened fawn.

For just one moment too long he wondered. Then, realizing her probable purpose, he rushed after her, but found that she was too far in the lead. He shouted but she seemed to run the harder. When he reached the bank her golden hair was floating above the water.

He gave his shoes a tug, broke the laces, plunged, and with long, sweeping strokes made his way towards her. Once at her side she fought him off until exhaustion left her helpless.

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Reaching the bank he folded his arms around her and carried her into the outer ward of the hospital. When consciousness returned her first words shocked them.

"Oh, I wanted to die," she groaned. "Why didn't you let me die?"

"Who is she?" he inquired of the head nurse.

"Don't know—she—her brother—last week—you know—at the Alhambra—you may have heard. They took him to the undertaker's and brought her here."

He nodded, understanding. The girl was part of the tragedy that Pete Turpin had wanted to keep dark. He took a keen look at the features. He had been trying to recall where he had seen the face before. He knew now. This was the golden-haired girl who, from behind the parted curtains in the red house, had looked out on to the Lighted Way on his first night in the Crossing. There was something behind all this. He would have to find out. His brain was in a whirl as he walked into the ward where Eula lay.

She was propped up in bed, her head swathed in bandages, and one arm in a sling.

"How did it happen?" he queried, "with such a horsewoman—you!"

She laughed bravely. She had been careless,

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holding the reins loosely. The pony had stumbled on a nest of hornets in a clump of bushes—been stung horribly, and had then gone wild. Oh, it was nothing—she would be well in a few days. He left her a half-hour later, promising to call often.

The hospital was crowded, and when he came again he found Eula and the girl he had saved from death in cots side by side. After a few preliminaries she gave a sign and he drew a folding partition between the cots.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” she whispered. “She was crazy at the time, but now she is glad to be alive. And to think that you were the one who saved her! She talks about you continually.”

She had taken his hand and, partly sitting up, had leaned over towards him. Half unconscious of the movement, he responded to the appeal of her lustrous eyes. Their lips were very near.

“It was nothing,” he told her.

“It was splendid,” she affirmed. “When I think of your quickness, your presence of mind, your strength—oh, sometimes I wish—I don’t know, but it’s so wonderful to be a man.”

“Nothing greater, except to be a woman,” he answered, cavalier fashion, as he smilingly carried her hand to his lips.

“Please don’t,” she requested, slightly alarmed

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at the speed with which things were travelling, her heart beating fast. And being very obedient, he very promptly "didn't." But the thing was already done.

"I wonder?" he remarked thoughtfully, as he nodded towards the cot hidden by the partition.

"So do I," returned Eula, "and I am going to find out."

When he came again Eula was so far recovered that she could sit and chat with him on the hospital porch. She handed him a small and faded newspaper-clipping, which read as follows :

"WANTED.—Young lady—position will be found for good-looking young woman who can act as church soloist in live mining town. Send photo first letter. Good salary arranged to right person. Apply Box A3, Kootenay Crossing, B.C."

"Whose box number is that?" he inquired.

"Pete Turpin's."

"And he did—surely he didn't do that?"

"Yes, he did. I couldn't believe it at first, but it is all true. Dressed up like a deacon he met her at the station. When it was too late she found out the deception. Her money gone—she was helpless. And such a frail, slight little thing! It seems that he took this way of getting her—thought it would be a huge joke."

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"It was just by accident I found out," Eula went on, "and in the strangest way. Pete sent me a bouquet of flowers with his card attached—Daddy and he have always been such friends—and I gave them to her. She looked so lonely and forlorn that I wanted to cheer her up. She went wild over them until she saw the card with Pete's name. That settled it. She threw them on the floor, jumped out of bed and stamped on them. We thought that she had suddenly gone crazy. It was a half-hour before we could get her quiet. Afterwards she told me the story."

"It seems that until her brother found her by accident—they were both orphans and had been separated years ago—and that dreadful thing happened, she had hopes of making an escape. She was saving her money to return. Now she knows that what has happened—his death—makes it all in a sense irretrievable—and the consciousness of it seems to madden her."

"Did you learn her name?"

"Yes, Maisie Gray. But I don't think that is her real name."

"Jameson was the name given by the man who—by the way, someone has been putting flowers on his grave."

"I did that—I thought that it would be a comfort to her to know."

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"Eula Lorimer, you're an angel."

"Nonsense—stop it."

"Truth only. But we'll have to do something more."

"I know it," she replied, "but I can't think what to do."

And during the days that followed this was the problem that confronted her. What could she do? What could the girl do? But what troubled her most was what could she do herself? One afternoon she walked over to the cot, determined to talk it over. She found her peacefully asleep, and off in dreamland, a smile on her face.

Yes, Maisie Gray was off in dreamland. Again she was a child and living in the child world. Again she plucked the violets and the buttercups and the daisies—the little queens of field and glen. And she saw further—more. There were the green fields beside the dancing brooks. She caught sight of the face of her mother, smiling and beautiful as of yore. A father she had never known. Thought ran riot, and dwelt on memories which swung around the fond mother who had tended and cared and loved. And it was so beautiful to live again in the quiet atmosphere of the old days, when Innocence had been so natural that she had not recognized its virtue; and Love had been so quietly great that she had

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not dreamed that it was ever possible for it to become a Passion and sometimes a Vice.

She awoke with a start. Seeing Eula near she smiled faintly.

"I am so sorry," she began. "It was hateful of me to do what I did, and you were so kind."

"No, you were merely honest, and to be honest is always to be right. I am the one who should feel ashamed. But I am helpless. I can't help an appearance of friendship, on account of Daddy. He and Turpin are mixed up in mining deals so."

"Oh!" exclaimed the girl, enlightened. "That explains it—I didn't know—and I couldn't see how you—you——"

She did not finish the sentence. A rather abrupt and uncomfortable silence followed. Little more was said, and a few minutes later Eula walked out into the garden.

She wanted to have time to think. The girl's frankness, and the peculiar position in which she found herself, made her feel pitifully mean and small. Anger swept through her. Oh, how she longed for freedom! If it were not for Daddy and the Silver Cloud, how she would enjoy looking Pete Turpin in the eye and telling him what she thought of him. And Pete and Dick were brothers. Suppose that

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some day Dick were to become like that. But, no—it was impossible. She chased the thought away. And yet—and yet—she didn't know—she couldn't tell.

It was a happy, glad hour when the doctor advised that she might return home. In her room she danced about as she began to make arrangements for her departure on the following day. Suddenly she stopped. The girl in the cot came into her mind. And she had not decided what she would do.

The girl had no friends. She was so utterly alone. Nobody came to see her except a stern Salvation Army captain and a pious, elderly preacher who knew little of that kind of life, and seemed to frighten her when he talked with her. Yes, she was so utterly alone.

The shades of night were falling as Eula sat on the side of the cot and told her that she was going home. A little hand crept out to clasp hers and a moment later she was startled by the sound of sobbing—a wild rush of tears.

“Why, what is the matter?” she asked, at the same time conscious that she knew.

“Oh, you have been so kind,” cried the sobbing girl, “the only friend I have—and I keep wondering and wondering what I am

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going to do. I don't seem to be able to see any way out."

With a rare understanding, Eula bent down and took the trembling girl in her arms. And as the tears rolled down the damp cheeks, she hugged her to her heart and tried to soothe her into quiet.

"I know that I ought to try and be brave and not give way like this," the weeping girl went on, "but—but it's so hard. In a week, or two weeks at most, I will be well and will have to leave. Where can I go? Turpin has sent word that he will pay the hospital bill if—oh, I can't say it—I can't go back. I'd scrub floors—anything—I'd die first."

Eula knew not what to say. What is to be said, anyway, when a human being asks, begs, implores for a chance to live and be happy? Is there anything to be done but to give them the chance?

With a rare swiftness Eula weighed the hazard. Her move would mean the enmity of Turpin, but even if it meant serious loss she would welcome that. She wanted to be free—to know that the shadow of his sinister influence was no longer hanging over their home and her life.

She kissed the girl on the cheek. It was the first time she had done that.

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"May," she whispered, "I want you to come out and stay with me for a time. The mountains and the open air will make a new woman out of you. And when you are stronger you can decide what to do."

The girl's eyes were like stars.

"Do you really mean it?"

"Of course I mean it. I'll hitch up the ponies in the buckboard and drive you out myself. And you'll have a pony to ride and all kinds of fun."

"It seems almost too good to be true," whispered May, slowly, "and as long as I live I'll never be able to thank you enough."

As the darkness deepened they talked on. But when bed-time came, and Eula was about to leave, May clung to her like a frightened child and burst out sobbing afresh.

"I know that I shouldn't cling to you this way," she cried, "but I do want somebody near me—I'm so lonely—and nervous—oh, I want somebody to talk to me, to hold me, to love me."

And Eula lay down beside her on the cot and held her close.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SHEPHERD'S STORY

AS Godfrey drew into the garden he saw no evidence of the Shepherd. Perhaps he was not at home. He tapped on the cabin door, but there was no response.

On his first visit to the Sheep Ranch he had regarded this strange man with a sort of vague curiosity, but to-day he all but envied him. Out in this beauty spot, alone with nature, and far away from the great competitive struggle he was living in the heart of a great and beautiful joy world.

He stooped down and lifted up a handful of the rich, soft earth. Slowly, sort of dreamily, he let it slip through his fingers. The simple act thrilled him. It was the heart of the universe. The seed buried in the depths of the soil brought forth grain and fruit which satisfied the hunger of a world. Lucky the man who lived close to nature—the tiller of the soil.

He waited for a time, but the Shepherd did not appear. No doubt he was away from home.

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But before going he determined to search carefully. He went to look for him.

He walked through the garden, between the rows of cabbages, past the thorny blackberry vines, and then passed through a wooden-hinged gate. Here he found the trail which led to the sheep pasture beyond. He followed it closely, crossed Copper Creek and there found the man he sought.

The Shepherd greeted him warmly. It was late afternoon then and he prevailed upon him to stay for supper. After the meal was over they sat upon the porch of the vine-covered cabin. The moon was rising in the distance. Darkness was coming on. Such an atmosphere breathes confidence, and the Shepherd told him a little about why he had selected such a spot for a home.

“It is eight years,” he volunteered, “since I decided to find a piece of land where I might make a home and spend the last of my days in peace. When there was nothing but a very poor trail I came up here—body-sick, heart-sick, soul-sick. And the combination of honest labour, peaceful habits and mountain air has cured me—healed me. The glory of these wonderful hills drove out the hollow barrenness. The everlasting joy springs began to flow. I am a happy man now—as happy as one can be

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who has passed through what I have. When the tragedy came I lost faith in everything—but just as the psalmist, by looking to the hills found strength, so the mountains have given me a New Hold on the Old Hope. What one of the world's soft-eyed creatures took away from me at the beginning, this glorious spot has given back to me toward the end."

As the Shepherd finished speaking his face was beaming. Serenely he looked out across the Boundary Valley towards the sky-topped ridges and the cloud-piercing peaks. He lighted a match, started his pipe going, and by the light of the flickering flame, Godfrey noted particularly the expression of his eyes. They had that peculiar look that he had noticed once before—the clear, calm glance, as though, gazing upon the further horizon, he saw far beyond.

In the days that followed, Godfrey paid many visits to the cabin home of the Shepherd. He was a frequent caller at Pine Ridge, and he rarely neglected to traverse the mile further which took him to the Sheep Ranch.

Within a few weeks the Forge of Understanding and Sympathy had welded the first links in the Chain of Friendship. And late one beautiful starry night they found themselves exchanging opinions on the Vale of the Shadowed

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Life and the Pathway of Suffering which leads to the Pinnacle of Peace.

No doubt it was this that paved the way for the Great Confidence. One evening the Shepherd took a locket from a drawer and handed it to Godfrey. He found himself gazing into the beautiful face of a young girl. And the strange thing was that he fancied that he had seen that face before. But the Shepherd had no sooner begun his story than he knew that it could not be possible.

“More than twenty-five years ago,” began the Shepherd, “I was the pastor of a prosperous church in a large town in the middle states. Two years before, at the age of twenty-eight, I had married the young woman you see there. We were very happy. It was a true love affair—at least, so I thought then. She was eight years my junior.

“But I soon found out that the burden of my work prevented me from giving her a good many of the pleasures of life that her nature craved. I was very serious-minded, completely absorbed in my work, while she possessed a heart and mind open, receptive to the gay things of life. However, in spite of this, we got on very well together. I humoured her with little fads and fancies, for I loved her like I loved my life.

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“At last there came the robber who stole all, like the thief who comes in the night. For several weeks she had been moody and pre-occupied. Nothing seemed to satisfy her. I probed and probed, but could not discover the cause. I thought that it might be on account of my being away from home a great deal—for I was much in demand to fill other pulpits in those days—so I declined several invitations to preach special sermons in order to be with her.

“Although it was a town church, I kept a horse and buggy. One weeknight I hitched my horse to the buggy and went to deliver a lecture five miles away. I wanted my wife to go along, but she refused, making some trivial excuse that both baffled and puzzled me. What could be the matter? I had a misfortune on the way home. My buggy broke down and I was compelled to make the rest of the journey on horseback. When I arrived home I found a strange rig in the yard. A suspicion of the truth sank deep into my heart—burning like fire, and cutting like a knife.

“I should have gone right into the house and faced her, but I could not bring myself to do it. I wanted to see just how far it had gone and then I would decide. I went around to the front of the house where there was an apple

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tree. The window of our bedroom was opposite the tree. The sash was raised a little and I heard the murmur of hushed voices and the rustle of a woman's skirt. The blind was raised slightly, and I crept to the window, looked and listened.

"My heart froze at what I saw. A strange young man, whom I could not remember as ever having seen before, was sitting on the big-cushioned chair by the fireplace, my wife upon his knee, and her cheek laid up against his. The sight almost drove me mad—it brought the memory of a thousand hallowed associations. Many a night I had sat there with her in my arms—dreaming dreams as I watched the leaping flames of the open fire. And now another had stolen my wife—my sweetheart—another had usurped my place in her affections.

"At first I thought of getting a gun and shooting him there and then. But on second thought I came to see that it was already too late. The mischief was done. Another had won her love. It was no longer mine. No doubt this explained her peculiar attitude of the past months. And as the significance of these facts burst in on me I wanted to die. I had nothing more to live for. But our capacity for suffering is great, and I stood it—somehow—just how—I don't know.

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“But there was still more. With my ear close to the window, I could hear him talking to her in a low, sweet tone while she whispered back—*sotto voce*—breathing his name with loving accent, and telling him that she had wondered if he would ever come.

“It was enough. I could endure no more. I was very impulsive in those days—made my decisions quickly and suffered for them afterwards—and so I rushed away and never went back. She had broken my heart. Nothing else mattered in life. There was a lake close by—just a mile or so from town—and I threw my hat upon its placid surface. They would think that I had ended it that way. When the morning came I was far away. I came west and took another name. The old one was polluted, tainted, and I could not use it any more. I have passed as Frank Raoul, but that is not my real name.

“After years of aimless wandering I came up here. And in this beautiful spot I have found happiness. It is not the same, but it is a great happiness, and I am glad.”

“And did you never hear of her again?”

“No, and I never wish to. What is past is past. I suppose that she married him after a while. But to her and to that world that I once knew I am no more than a dead man.”

CHAPTER XIV

MAISIE GRAY'S NEW FRIEND

SOMETHING unlooked for had happened. In spite of his well-known aversion to women, a friendship that was not without an element of danger had sprung up between the Shepherd and Maisie Gray.

Within a few weeks after she left the hospital the slight, frail, young girl had become a different creature. Health and Hope had come back to her. What she had passed through seemed to have been pushed back into the past. One would almost imagine that as she galloped over the hills in the crisp, autumn air that the joy of living amid the pines and mountains with the best girl friend in the world for a companion had blotted out the cruel memory. She had not yet fully sensed the fact of her dependence, for they never allowed her to feel it. That was to come. For the present, she was free and happier than she had been since childhood.

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Eula never forgot the day of Maisie's first meeting with the Shepherd. It was in the garden of their home at Pine Ridge. It was a bright day, with Indian summer lending its soft enchantment. The Shepherd had come over on some casual errand. When he first sighted her the girl was sitting in a rustic chair near the porch steps. He stopped stone still, gazing at her as though she had suddenly appeared out of some other world.

"My God!" he exclaimed, "you—you."

Eula was between them in a moment, wondering, apprehensive. The girl rose and walked towards him unsteadily. She was trying to remember. She did not speak a word.

"What—what is it?" broke in Eula.

"I don't know," the Shepherd replied. "She reminds me of—and then I know that it cannot be. That was so long ago. She would be well on toward fifty now."

And still the girl was trying to remember. Her hand was raised to her forehead.

"What is it?" asked Eula, and then, bending over the girl, she whispered, "Tell me—tell me?"

"Oh, I wish that I could—but I can't—I can't remember."

After the first meeting the Shepherd was

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often found at the Lorimers', coming over on the most trivial errands, and often without any excuse at all. Invariably Maisie would walk back with him, seldom returning until late in the afternoon.

The Shepherd was so little in the Crossing, and he was so much out of touch with the world, that he knew nothing of the experience which had resulted in Maisie's sojourn in the hospital. The Lorimers had told him nothing. But his intuition was keen. Then one day she told him that there was something—no, she could not tell him or anyone—but it had left a dark spot in her life. At the time they were passing through a partially burnt over section of the great forest.

He pointed to a large tree, the bark and limbs of which had been blackened by a forest fire.

"It will never be the same again, will it?" he queried.

"No," she told him frankly, "it will not."

"And yet," he went on, "if the woodsman were to begin his work at once, he would find the heart sound, and as good saw timber in the centre of that blackened hulk as in that green tree yonder."

She did not reply, but turned towards him with pain and appeal in her blue eyes. She was on the verge of tears.

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‘It is part of the compensation of life,’ he went on, “that when something is taken away, something is left that was not given before. Sorrow comes, Pride is lowered in the dust, and Sympathy rears its head from the ashes. The Kingdom of the Family is dismembered and consolation comes through the rearing within of the Kingdom of the Soul.”

It was after this that the girl began to speculate what the future might hold for her. She was eager for service. One day she mentioned this to the Shepherd. But he told her to dismiss the thought for the present, to enjoy the wild, free life of the mountains, to live her life to the full among the good friends that had been given to her. Her opportunity would come.

About a week later Godfrey spent an afternoon with the Shepherd and found him in a much perturbed mood. The man seemed to be all broken up. His poise—self-confidence was all gone. Just as Godfrey was leaving he unburdened himself. He told him what had happened.

“You remember the story I told you,” said the Shepherd.

Godfrey nodded.

“Well, last night I had a strange dream. My wife came into the room and spoke to me—called

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me by my first name. She told me to look after our children—said that there had been a terrible quarrel—yes, that something awful had taken place—and that she had seen blood on their hands. There is something that I do not understand. I never thought that there could have been children. Oh, my God—just to think what it is that I may have missed ! ”

A long silence followed. Godfrey felt that there was nothing that he could say.

“ Good-night,” he said finally.

“ Good-bye,” returned the Shepherd. “ I am going back to try to find out. I can’t piece it—put it together—the thing eludes me. And I may be a long time away.”

Godfrey carried the memory of that scene with him for many a day. The Shepherd, crushed, broken, his belief in the wisdom of his course terribly shaken—the whole background shrouded in mystery.

But before he went away there was a chance meeting between him and the girl which left a permanent impression on both. He had wandered into the woods in search of a stray-away member of his flock. She had drifted off into the woods because recollection had come that morning, and anything but solitude seemed to be unbearable.

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They sat on a grassy mound and talked for half the afternoon. Strange instincts stirred in the hearts of both. The Shepherd looked at the pale blonde features and silently bemoaned the fate that had not given him such a one for a daughter. She looked at the keen, kindly eyes, the broad forehead, and thought that if life could have given him to her for a father how she would have loved him.

And then he noticed that she was wearing a locket that he had never seen before. She undid the clasp and gave it into his shaking hands. Great drops of sweat came out on his brow.

"Where did you get this locket?" he whispered hoarsely.

"I don't know. It seems to me that I have always had it—but I can't—I can't remember."

He rose. She followed him. He looked into her eyes, seeing all there he would have cared to see if the reality stood in place of the dream. He must get away quickly. He must know—he must find out. He must unravel the mystery.

He started to say good-bye.

Moved more than she dared admit, she inquired the meaning of his going.

"I have heard strange news," he told her, "and I must go."

"But so soon? Must you go so soon?"

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"Yes."

"I am sorry. I don't know—I can't tell why, but these few weeks, and to-day—this afternoon. It has all seemed so wonderful."

His face lighted up.

"And it has been that way with you?"

"Yes," she whispered.

"I wonder why?"

"I don't know—I can't remember. It seems to me that if I could we would know. But I have never had a father and it just seemed that if I had had one he would have been like you."

He stepped nearer. He put his arm around her shoulders and drew her head against his breast.

"My daughter—some day I may be able to tell you—some day when I have the sequel to the strange news. But while I am gone remember the things we have talked about—especially the things of the spirit. When I come back, I may——" and he stopped.

He broke down utterly, kissed her passionately on cheek and lips and brow, rushed from her presence and was gone.

CHAPTER XV

GODFREY EMMETT INTERFERES

THE autumn flitted and the winter came. The snow fell almost knee-deep in the valleys, and on the mountain tops the depth of a man's height and more. But the covering of snow did not stay the boom. It became greater, bigger, wilder. Claims with nothing but the stakes standing in the snow sold like reserved seat tickets to a ragtime vaudeville show in a wide-open town. A coterie of daring brokers made fortunes out of paper mines. Well-groomed promoters sat in the cushioned chairs of snug offices dictating Ananias letters that would have choked that worthy black in the face. Spokane got in big, scented a drop, and got out from under. New York took the tip and kept on the safe side. But London and Toronto bit, and bit deep.

All the flowers which grow in such a fertile soil budded, blossomed and flourished. A horde

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of tinhorn gamblers fattened on the labour of honest men. Saloons were as common as turns in a crooked street. Whisky flowed like water and champagne washed down like a Jersey's milk. The green tables were never idle, and the wheels of chance whirled and whizzed continually. And at night Broadway south by the winding creek looked **for** all the world like the lower end of a railroad yard with all the danger signals on fire.

But withal there was present in the camp courage and optimism of the kind that makes a country. Prospectors with lost leads hung grimly on until they found them again, or gave up with a sigh which sounded most like an exclamation preceding another start.

Godfrey was continually tempted, but he was fighting with a will. His negatives brought him many a strange look, but he did not have that generous jaw for nothing ; and when things were at their wildest that winter he looked his problem fair in the face. One bitter cold day he climbed to the summit of Bald Knob, built a fire, and sat down and thought. He stopped around the camp fire until late that winter evening. And when he came down into the valley again his eyes were alight and his jaw was set.

On the first day of the New Year he ate turkey

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and cranberry sauce with the Lorimers at Pine Ridge. It was a day of long and pleasant memory. Maisie Gray was still there, and sat opposite to him, her face aglow, but her eyes were troubled—a new, far-away look had come into them. They had struck a new lead on the Silver Cloud, and Jack Lorimer was in great spirits. He was a blithe host. As for Eula, Godfrey was sure that he had never seen her looking better. Long ago he had recognized what had happened to him, but the fierceness of the battle was sealing his lips. Often his eyes spoke, and he fancied that hers answered back ; but that was all.

The early winter boasted one social event of importance. Bruce Jimmy was married to Nurse Collins amid the congratulations and rejoicing of their friends. They went to California on their honeymoon, taking baby Lelia with them.

About mid-January Maylor was elected Mayor of the Crossing by a large majority. For a time he steadily refused a nomination, but his friends insisted. He finally consented, but he did not like the job.

As Godfrey was walking along one of the residential streets on his way home one evening in the early spring he was surprised to see a young woman sitting on a large rock which decorated one side of the poorly-graded roadway. She

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appeared to be much depressed. Her head was between her hands and her eyes were on the ground. On one side of her was a rather shabby suit-case and on the other was a shawl-strap bundle. As he came directly opposite her she raised her head and looked at him. He was astounded. It was none other than Maisie Gray.

"What!" he exclaimed, "you—you!"

"Yes, I—I——"

"But I thought that you were still at Lormer's?"

"I came away from there three days ago."

"But why?"

"Oh, I wanted to do something for myself. I simply could not impose on their kindness any longer."

"And what have you been doing in the Crossing?"

"I have been trying to find work. I looked for a position as stenographer—I learned that several years ago—but everybody seems to be full up. Then I tried housekeeping, found a nice place, and this is the result."

"So you can't cook?"

Her blue eyes turned on him with a glittering coldness.

"No, no; it's not that," she affirmed, with a

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passionate earnestness. "I can make bread and pastry with any of them. Even the lady admitted that. But since I won't let Turpin be my friend he has started to persecute me. He got somebody to talk to her and she turned me out. I guess he thinks that he'll drive me to it. But I won't—I'd scrub floors—wash for a living—anything—I'd die before I would accept anything from him."

"Pete Turpin—what?—that devil?"

His jaws came together with a snap and he began to say things under his breath. In his anger he turned his head away a moment. And when his eyes rested on the girl again she was crying.

"I thought," she sobbed, "that I had found such a nice place. The pay was good and the lady was kind. She seemed to be so—so sympathetic. Only yesterday there were some ladies at her house—church ladies, you know—and one of them talked about helping girls who—well, who needed help; and I just thought that everything was going to be all right. And then—this afternoon—just a few minutes ago—she said just awful things—things that aren't the least bit true—and turned me out. And I—I don't know where to go. I was resting a little and trying to think."

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"Have you anything in mind?"

"No; and in another way I have. Only I'm afraid that it is impossible."

"What is it?"

"Nursing. I would like to get into a hospital. It was just lovely at Lorimer's, but it didn't solve my problem of existence. This other would do that. Not that they didn't want me to stay. They did. But I couldn't think of letting them keep me."

"You are not particularly strong. Could you stand the work?"

"I think I could. But that would not matter. If I broke down the end would come just that much sooner."

"Don't—you mustn't," he protested.

"I know—I know," she answered, "but I get so weary that it seems to me that heaven would be to lay down never more to rise."

"I am sorry—very sorry. Eula should not have allowed you to go."

"But she didn't. I just came away. And, Mr. Emmett, there is something I want to say. Oh, I don't know just how to say it—but—but don't put it off too long. She cares more than you might think."

For a moment he was speechless, aghast that she had guessed his secret. He was going to

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stop her, but found that he could not. She talked on.

"Oh, don't think that I don't know, for I do," she affirmed. "It could not be otherwise when I see the way you look at her, and know how she thinks of you. And the—there is something I don't understand. She gets letters that she cries over—and then—you seem so cold and distant in spite of the way you look. And I love her so much that I can't——"

But he would not permit her to say anything more. Again they talked of her problem.

"Yes," she told him, "it just seems to me that if I were in a hospital at a railroad construction camp, or where there are a great many mines—any place where there are terrible accidents right along—it would be the very work I need. You see, I'm so lonely and I can fancy the men being brought in to the ward, crushed, bleeding, blood-spattered, and crying, begging for mother, sister, sweetheart, home—their faces writhing in agony and their bodies racked with pain. In the presence of scenes like that I am sure that I could forget everything else. I would be so steadily employed in trying to ease the sufferings of others that I would have no time to think of mental torture of my own."

GODFREY EMMETT INTERFERES

He saw what her malady was now. The wound would never heal.

"If you long for it like that, it is no doubt the thing for you to do. But you must go somewhere for the night. Let me see—I'll take you up to the Boundary. It's a fairly quiet place."

"No, no; I must not let you do that. And if I go up town, Turpin will be sure to hear of it. It must be somewhere else."

"Well, what's the matter with asking this lady—no, this house here—to keep you for the night?"

"She wouldn't do it."

"Don't be so sure of that. I know her to be good and kind. I'll ask her myself."

"No, you mustn't—you mustn't."

"I will." There was determination in his voice.

"You must not." Her tone was decisive.

"But I will. Which house is it?"

"Please don't bother. She will only say mean things and you will be sorry."

"Never mind. Which is the house?"

She nodded in the direction of a new home—one of the best-appointed houses in the Crossing. In her movement there was a certain suggestion of hopelessness.

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A well-dressed woman came to the door—a woman upon whom the touch of years sat lightly. She welcomed him with a smile, and until he had stated his errand there was no frown. Later the frown gave way before signs of anger. And when he came down the steps a few minutes later his head was bowed and his cheeks were burning.

When he reached the spot where the girl had been seated a surprise awaited him. She was not there.

He spent an hour trying to find her, but every pathway seemed blocked. He could get no clue. He returned home baffled and disappointed.

CHAPTER XVI

THE EMERGENCY

GODFREY EMMETT had no sooner rushed up the steps of the Jones's house than Maisie Gray began to take stock of the situation. And as the total mounted up a great nervousness seized her. The memory of the harsh, stinging words of the afternoon brought a cold wave of despair. To remain longer would be impossible. Even if he did persuade her, she could not dine on what was given thus after she lunched on what had been thrown. It was unthinkable. She had shed tears enough.

She rose to her feet, moved away a few yards and stood hesitating. And suppose that he should make the woman surrender to his demand? What would she do? In a minute he would be back. She would have to think it out.

Perhaps—yes—yes—she might. And standing

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there in the gloom of the darkening twilight a slight, nervous figure, her eyes suddenly bright, for one hundred seconds she dreamed her dream. Then cold reason brought her back to stern fact with a fierce, vivid relentlessness. The tears welled over the swimming eyelids. The light-coloured lashes dampened. The mouth twitched, tightened to a grim, thin, set line. Yes, she knew that it was wrong—foolish. The dream could never be.

Her decision behind her, she hurried up the street, making her plans as she went. She had very little money, and she would have to make it go as far as possible. A restaurant window loaded with tempting delicacies reminded her that she was hungry, and she passed in and had supper. Afterwards she visited a livery and asked for a return horse to Pine Ridge. She left her bundle and suit-case in the office, remarking that she would send for them later.

On the way up the trail her heart warmed at the thought of the kindness that had been showered upon her during her residence at the home among the pines. She had not been altogether happy there—she doubted if she would ever be really happy again—but their attitude had been so sincere and their hospitality so generous that it was impossible not

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to be moved by the memory. She recalled the parting distinctly. It might have been that Eula was a little lonely ; but she would never forget how that she had hugged her close, kissed her on cheek and brow, and had begged for a promise that she would come back. She had never had a sister. Although silent before such a demonstration, her self-control had been bought dearly. But when she was well away she had vowed in her independent little heart that she would not go back. She had an absolute horror of dependence. *And now she was going back.*

At the crest of a long, rocky grade, the pony halted, resting. The spring night was very still. Not a leaf stirred. Not a bird called. And as she sat there in the saddle, the right hand holding the reins as it rested on the pommel, left arm akimbo, head bent forward slightly, she seemed to be in commune with the great world of nature that was so calm and still. Perhaps something—some strange new voice was speaking.

The pony started to go on, but she tightened the rein. Not yet, she affirmed. She would have to think. She might not go back after all.

Instinct seemed to warn her of a change

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impending. And yet in her heart she knew that there was nothing—could be nothing for her. She might go back to the home among the Pines, but that would not solve her problem—it would not bring independence. And still she sat there in the saddle, idly pondering, reluctant to go on, and wondering why she stayed.

A few rods up the mountain she noticed a light in a miner's cabin. It was very humble, no doubt; but her heart bounded at the thought that to someone it might mean a home.

A great roar of blasting rock crashed into her reverie. The earth shook beneath them. The nervous pony turned about, uneasy, frightened. Silence followed the last echoing roar that reverberated through the mountains. The pony was fretful, wanted to go on, and still she held him back, not knowing why, and wholly unconscious that it is often but the work of a moment to settle the destiny of a life.

Then somewhere above her she heard a loud cry—a groan. She peered forward into the darkness, listening intently, trying to see but not seeing.

A moment later a young man came rushing down the mountain side. Breathless, he could scarcely tell his story. His partner had bungled the firing, the blast going off as he stood above

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it. One leg was all but shot away. Could she bring a doctor ?

There was not a moment's hesitation once she understood what was needed, but as she turned the pony towards the Crossing, she recalled an incident during her girlhood when a wise lady had saved a life, and acting at once, she flashed a query,

"Has the leg been bandaged ? "

"No."

"Then it is being done ? "

"No, I am all alone. I'll do the best I can while you are away."

"Is it bleeding much ? "

"Terribly—must have cut an artery."

There was not a moment to be lost and she did not delay. Something in the quaver of his voice told that here was a weak man where only the strong survive. She dug in the spurs and the pony dashed up the mountain-side at a gallop.

Running, scrambling, somehow the young man managed to keep up with her as they sped up the mountain towards the scene of the accident. Lifting her from the saddle, he led her to the door of the tunnel. With a dim candle to light the way they groped along the passage.

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The man was pale as a ghost. A gentle twitching of the muscles was the only sign of life. The torn leg was ghastly and the clothing was soaked in blood.

She had taken the precaution to bring the saddle-rope. She bent down, bared the leg above the knee, passed the rope around, made a loop, put a stick through, and twisted until the blood stopped flowing. A few minutes more and life would have been extinct.

Glancing up, she caught a look of admiration in the young man's eyes.

She suggested that he improvise a stretcher, but found him already at work. They carried him into the cabin and laid him down on the bed.

With her first glance she scanned the shelves. Catching sight of some beef tea extract, she seized a can and put the kettle on. The fire had not gone out.

"Now," she commanded, addressing the young man, "you take the horse and bring a doctor. I'll try and keep him alive until he comes."

"But I've never rode—the horse—the horse might buck—and—and——"

Her glance of scorn was withering.

"And this man never got his leg torn off

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before," she hurled at him. "Oh, hurry—in the name of Heaven—go."

He went. If he had not, she would have pushed him through the doorway.

With the kettle boiling she made some beef tea. She tasted it. Yes, it was just right, She seated herself on the side of the cot and drew the head of the wounded man into her lap.

As she bent over him she caught a whiff of something peculiar, and lowered her head until her ear was before his mouth. A look of pain o'erspread her features. She understood now. It was the old story. No wonder he had made a bungle of the firing.

She pressed the lips open and forced in some of the liquid. Then she made him take more and more, and after a time the reward came. There was twitching of the lips, a slight tensing of the muscles and he opened his eyes. He smiled faintly and closed them again. Then his lips moved.

"Helen," he whispered.

A strange instinct moved her to draw his head against her breast. He seemed to be content.

Later, by exerting all her strength, she managed to lift him over on to a rude couch.

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After bathing the wound in hot water, she tried to find some white cloth to make a bandage.

The search was fruitless. She thought of white sheets and encountered grey blankets. She looked at the table but the covering was oilcloth. But she was not to be beaten. She turned away a moment, tugged at her bodice, and faced him with some soft, white stuff in her hands. She found some salve on one of the shelves and made a bandage.

The mountain air of the spring night was a little chilly and she kept on a good fire. He must not get the least bit cold. Again his lips moved, and once more he whispered :

“Helen.”

She wondered who Helen could be ? He had spoken of her twice now. Glancing along the wall she saw a cabinet photo—signed. The name—Helen—was written in a distinctly feminine hand. It was a very good face ; and so this was Helen.

Well, he loved her, and she would save him for her if it was in her power. She would do what she could. And as she sat there, watching eagerly for every little sign of life, it came to her with a new force and power that the ministry of a simple woman in a shoulder apron and a white cap was a vital, necessary element

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in the work of life. Here—beside her—was a life hanging in the balance. Away off somewhere else was that other life that was so much bound up with the one that she was trying to save.

She glanced again at the photo—at the laughter of the eyes and lips. And as she looked closer she fancied that she saw another quality—that of appeal. Well, she had answered. If her work would do it, she would give him back to the warm caress of those beckoning lips.

It seemed a very long time until the doctor came. Every sound in the woodland led her to hope that it might be him, and every new stillness filled her with a vague dread and fear that he might be too late.

But at last he came. And when the wound had been dressed, rebandaged, and the danger for the time was passed, he turned to her with a query. They were waiting for a rig to take him to the hospital.

“So you’re the woman doctor?” he said smiling.

“The woman doctor?” she repeated, confused, bewildered.

Just then the timid young man appeared in the doorway.

“I think,” said the doctor, as he winked at the girl, and then looked at the man, “that my

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horse is so warm that you had better walk him up and down a little—just so that he will not cool off too quickly.”

The young man obeyed.

“ You are very careful of your horse ? ”

“ Not so very,” he returned, “ only I did want to get rid of him while I told you what he said. When he came to the office he said that he wanted the doctor. Of course, there was a doctor up there now—he was pretty sure that she was some kind of a doctor—a woman doctor. She had happened to be passing on the road, and had taken things in hand right away. She had made him ride to town without a bridle rein and had talked to him like an Amazon. But say—you’ve got him sure. He swears by you. And everything considered, he is hardly to be blamed.”

“ Well, I didn’t do very much,” she insisted, colouring. “ Only I knew that if I didn’t stop the blood he would bleed to death.”

“ No, you didn’t do very much,” replied the doctor with mild sarcasm. “ And if this man is ever able to fire a hole again, he’ll owe it to you. That scared young tenderfoot would have let him die like a dog. He wouldn’t have come to the door just now if he hadn’t thought that the leg was bandaged up. He can’t stand the

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sight of blood. He told me that when they used to butcher hogs down home he always went to the cellar and hid. Don't doubt it. Then he heard about the Kootenay, and thought that if he came out here he would make his fortune in a year. The very idea. But he's only a boy—he will learn in time."

"Is there any hope?" was Maisie's question. She glanced towards the injured man. The young man's brow wrinkled before he answered:

"Yes," he replied, "a little, a very little. I have done all that can be done until we get him to the hospital. We'll have to operate then, and he will have to get along without a leg from just above the knee. It can't be saved below that. There is a possibility of blood poisoning, but we'll have to watch it. Well, here comes the rig—I can hear it. And upon my word—Miss—Miss?"

"Gray," she told him.

"Well, as I was saying, I would like to know how this miner happened to be lucky enough to fire that shot a few minutes before a mighty clever nurse comes along."

She saw that he misunderstood, and she caught at it as a gleam of hope. But she could not allow him to continue in his misunderstanding. She told him that she was not a trained nurse.

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"Well, if you are not, you ought to be," he returned. "If you have done this without training what would you be able to do with training? You would be one of the first ones—that's all. And just now they are one of our country's greatest needs. Have you ever thought about the work?"

"Oh, often—yes, often. I'd love it, I think."

"I'm glad to hear it. Now, I've got an appointment as railroad doctor at Camp Three, where the South Central is building over the Summit. There is a hospital there and nurses are as scarce as fresh eggs in a bonanza camp. But I must admit that from the nurse's viewpoint the outlook is not promising. I could not hold out much inducement beyond isolation and work—neither of them very inviting."

"I don't think that I would mind if I were busy."

"But there's more than that. Last fall a crazy division manager pitched a camp in a muskeg without a bottom and I'm looking forward to the greatest typhoid fight I ever had in my life."

"That would not matter."

"Great Scott!—you're a brick. You don't mean that you would think of going?"

"Yes, I'll go."

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"Jove! I like that. You put ginger into a spineless kid and now you tell me that you are not afraid of a camp pitched in a muskeg without a bottom! I guess you'll do." He spoke decisively.

Just then the driver came up with a rig and the wounded man was carried out. Maisie turned to the young tenderfoot.

"How did it happen?" she questioned, in spite of the fact that she already knew.

"Oh, me and him was runnin' a tunnel on the Golden Bee. We were all' alone and made a practice of doin' the shootin' at night. Bill went down town, got on the jim-jams, and brought back a few bottles. And here in the evenin' he took a notion to get on the outside of all that was left and succeeded fine. And then nothin' would do but he must fire. He bungled it some way, for the first thing I knew he was hollerin' for someone to carry him out."

The carriage had gone, and the young doctor was about to mount his horse when Maisie came up and questioned him.

"When do you go?"

"The day after to-morrow."

"Then I will go if—if—you will take me."

She could hardly believe her good fortune. She was making a desperate effort at self-control,

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but in spite of the effort her voice faltered. She was almost afraid that he could hear her heart hammering against her ribs. She was so excited she could hardly stand. For suppose that he was not in earnest, and that he would not take her ?

"Of course I'll take you. I think I made that clear. But you must remember the conditions—what you are facing."

"That does not matter. I'll be there."

She spoke quietly. But there was a little thrill of triumph in her voice.

It was a bright morning when the eastbound stage pulled up in front of the Boundary Hotel. Maisie Gray, light of heart and full of hope, was one of the passengers. A young man came up, looked at her a moment, asked a few questions, and then poured the contents of his purse into her hand. It was Godfrey Emmett.

"I am delighted," he whispered. "I wish you well."

And before she could decline what he had offered he was gone.

CHAPTER XVII

BRUCE JIMMY SPEAKS HIS MIND

IN May Bruce Jimmy returned from California with his bride. The second day after his return he met John Lorimer on the Pine Ridge trail.

"Jack," he remarked casually, "you will remember Blanche Brooks?"

Lorimer nodded.

"Well, while away I discovered that, true to her threat when she broke with Pete, she followed Dick to 'Frisco, and has made him quite as much her slave as Pete ever was. It seems that Dick has been spending large sums on her, and the irony of it lies in the fact that Pete is furnishing the money."

"You are sure there can be no doubt that what you say is correct?"

"Absolutely sure. I couldn't believe it at first, but I hung around a little, and found that it was all too true. Fact is, Dick was kicked out

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of his University, although Pete doesn't know that yet. He is working in an assay office now."

Lorimer was silent, but his face went white.

"I am not very old," Ross went on, "but I've found out that one of the finest things in this world is a good woman. Likewise, this fair old earth holds no greater curse than a bad one. And it is a trait of women like Blanche that they most delight to conquer and beguile the innocent youth. It may be that because the game is most dangerous it proves to be the most attractive. Or perhaps it is that association with innocent youth brings sweet, sad memories of a part of themselves that is dead and buried for ever."

Lorimer turned it over in his mind and considered that Eula ought to know. But when he told her she seemed to be very little concerned.

Within a few days Bruce Jimmy began to build a home near his cabin on the hillside, overlooking the town. On his way to the hills one afternoon Godfrey found him hard at work. At the rear of the cabin a tent had been erected for temporary quarters.

Lelia had grown considerably, and had developed into a very pretty child. And she was everywhere. If Jimmy went to the spring she must needs accompany him. If he saddled the pony and rode to the mine she sat at the pommel. If he read the paper she must be on his knee. She

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had two pets, a kitten and a pup, and in one way and another she pretty well ruled the household.

But on this particular day the prospector was in a very angry mood. He was not what you would call a religious man, but he liked to see the church supported and he gave liberally. A young preacher to whom he had become much attached, a splendid, broad-minded young fellow, had been transferred as the result of the protest of a small minority, who considered that he was not orthodox. He was very popular in the Crossing, and had a large following among the men of the camps. An exceptionally good mixer, he had got very close to the heart of the men of the hills. And now at a word he had been removed. An illiterate young Cornishman named Whitmer, who consistently preached hell-fire and damnation, had been sent in to fill the vacant place. Bruce Jimmy found it impossible to restrain his feelings.

"I tell you what," he emphasized, "the way them 'ere church digitaries carries on things in this 'ere country don't suit me at all. What if that kid preacher did go to a dance one night and took more than one look at a pretty girl? What if he did preach in a bar-room out at a camp—couldn't get anywhere else—and took a drink of lemon and ginger after the thing was

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over ! What if he did let a woman with a past sing ‘ Nearer, my God, to Thee,’ during a service at King’s road-house ?—why, they say there was hardly a dry eye in the place. What if the old heads did get him tangled up in an oral examination on his theology ! Main thing is that he was white all through, loved the people, and they loved him. And just to think that a few stiff-backed, moss-grown old mammies got him shifted !

“ And that ain’t all,” he went on, chopping off many of his words, as he always did when he was excited. “ The church business in the Crossin’ ain’t run right. But they might do somethin’ if they went about it proper—but they don’t—no, sirree—they don’t. Why, instead of gettin’ together, and makin’ or tryin’ to make things more conducin’ to good livin’, they go a-travellin’ in five different kinds of band wagons—a powerful sight different flag a-histed on each one. Instead of buildin’ one church—a good sight big one, with a readin’-room and games, besides a gymnastium with excerisin’ sticks and swim-tanks and bath-rooms and all like this, they heve five pesky shiverin’ buildin’s—the walls so thin mostly that a good wind would sweep the sermon right through. Then they only have them open for a few hours every week. Just think of it ! Churches open a couple of

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hours ! Saloons open one hundred and sixty-eight ! Bah ! What a devil's way of doin' it is ! ”

Godfrey was silent. He had often had thoughts like this himself.

“ It's like this,” Jimmy continued, when he had taken time for breath, “ if ye like the good Father's way he'll make it all right with Holy Water. The vicar will see that ye get through by way of the Apostolic Succession—whatever road that is. The man with the canny talk and who calls a church a ‘ kirk ’ will push the Confession of Faith up before ye. The Wesleyan will consider if ye're a good roarer, and if ye'll frown at the nine spots and keep your feet still when the music's good and the floor is slippery. The—them—yes, what's them people who keeps a tub in the corner—oh, yes, the Baptisimilians—well, they'll make it all right by givin' ye a sprinklin' and a dip. But they don't none of them get down to the heart of the problem. They don't get down alongside a man—down where they can think his thoughts and feel his feelin's. Of course, Lancey was the right kind, but they've gone and taken him away. Seems to me that they spend far too much time fightin' with their mouths over the Jonah story or the Adam story or some other kind of a story. Or they'll spend a lot of time discussin' who somebody

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was the son of, and who was the father of somebody else. What they want to do is to get mighty concerned with livin' men, not dead ones. They want to figure out how a man's goin' to make himself strong enough to say 'No' and to stand firm when he has to. But it seems to me that the competin'—the fightin' and quarrelin' among themselves is the worst of all. Tell you what it is—if they'd all get together in the Crossin', and everywhere else for that matter—union, or whatever it is—Ole Nick would jist heve to hit the trail a-humpin'."

"Jimmy," said Godfrey, when he saw that he could get a word in, "if you don't cool off you are liable to blow up."

Godfrey was just leaving when Mrs. Ross interjected a new note into the conversation. From the tent doorway she had listened to the tirade.

"Whitmer might astonish us all," she remarked dryly, "even if his hair does stand on end, and his nose is crooked. He has plenty of the great essential—bull-dog grit. It wouldn't surprise me if some day he were to turn loose and give this town a shaking. The Ring is not going to live for ever."

And although it is not recorded in this narrative, that is just what, towards the end of his term, this determined young man did.

CHAPTER XVIII

TEMPTATION AND TWO ON THE TRAIL

JUST below Pine Ridge there lies a wide, level plateau of several hundred acres. It is a pretty spot. Towering pines lift their majestic heads at intervals. A trail runs across the lower corner, following the crest of a grassy knoll.

Godfrey followed the trail to the rising ground and sat down on a hollow pine log to rest. A few feet away there was a spring amid a sheltered clump of trees.

He was rather depressed. Of late the battle had been one long victory, but to-day the enemy had him in the trenches. He had purposely ridden out in the hills to avoid temptation.

Suddenly temptation confronted him. Looking down, he realized that he had stumbled on to a rendezvous. Three bottles lay in the end of the hollow log. One had the seal broken and the cork was loose.

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Someone came down the path, and seeing him there, slipped behind a tree, but he did not see or notice.

He came to a quick decision, and stooping down, smashed them one by one on a jagged rock near by. A moment later Eula Lorimer stood before him in the path.

"I am glad," she told him. "They belong to Pete. But tell me—why—why did you do it?"

"You—you here!" he exclaimed. "Oh, why are you here?"

"By chance, it seems—and why should I not?"

"Nothing—only——"

He stopped there. That was all. There was nothing to be said or done. As swift as a lightning flash a wall of exclusion rose up between them.

But she was not dismayed for more than a moment. Slowly, quietly, she moved over towards him, her skirt trailing in the long grass. She came closer and closer, silent, wordless, an atmosphere of peace—of quiet power exhaling from her—a shimmering wave of reinforcement filtering through the summer air. She was very close now—so close that by reaching out her hand she could touch his sleeve.

The day was warm. In the tree-tops a blue

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bird piped out its wonder-song. A bumble bee whizzed by them. A wasp crawled up Godfrey's arm and stung him below the elbow. At their feet a lizard crept past. A bull snake crossed the trail—lazily.

And then she spoke, softly, kindly, and the invisible wall of exclusion wavered, fell, and in falling, was shattered into powdery dust.

"Godfrey," she whispered. "What is it—tell me?"

The tender note in her voice thrilled him, but shame held him dumb.

In her simple attire of blue and white she made a perfect setting against the background of the deep green of the grass and leaves and the dull greyishness of the barked trunks. And as she stood before him thus a sudden longing possessed him to know himself fit to mate with the best of what he saw in her. Emotion gripped him. He felt a deep hungering for companionship, for friendship, for love.

Man must be strong. He must succeed. But was it intended that he should succeed alone?

And it was after this that he began to talk. He never knew just how he told her; but a half-hour later he knew that he had told her, making clear the pinnacles he had to climb, the valleys he had to cross.

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"I remember that first day you came up," she told him. "Father offered, and although you did not decline, I noticed that you took no more than a few sips. I wish that I had known then. I might have made it easier."

"You have made it easy—very easy, dear friend," he whispered. "How easy you will never know."

Things that had been very hazy before were quite clear to the girl now. She recalled the far-away look in his eyes on that first day at the road-house; his periods of melancholy; his habit of dropping off into strange moods—poses, attitudes to which she was a stranger—all these were explained now. A desire that was half maternal swept through her. Surely he needed her friendship more than ever. New thoughts began to take root in her girlish heart.

"I seem to hate it all at once," she exclaimed with a peculiar fierceness. "I do wish that Pete would not leave them around."

They went up the trail to Pine Ridge; and were no sooner out of sight than Pete Turpin rode up, found the bottles broken, and began cursing vigorously. He turned about, jumped on his horse and road up to the ridge. He found them all in the garden.

"Say, Jack," he remarked, addressing Lorimer,

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"what do you think? I left a few bottles of seven-year-old in a hollow log while I went up on the hill to look at a claim a fellow brought some samples from yesterday. And while I was up there, some son of a sea-cook came along and smashed them all."

On the instant Eula turned white. Pete noticed this, and became suspicious. And why was this Emmett fellow hanging around? He didn't like it at all.

"I did it," said Eula simply.

"You did it—and what for?"

"For no reason that you would understand—and I am not sorry."

"For the love of Heaven—a woman—you!" He mounted his horse and rode away.

And as he rode he muttered to himself beneath his breath, "Trust a young woman to do something foolish. Get them started and they sure are the limit. No, I don't understand women at all." When he reached the Crossing his horse was covered with foam.

Godfrey and Eula started for a ride out through the hills. But when they had passed through the outer gate she excused herself by saying that she had forgotten something, and tripped back to where her father was standing at the door.

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"Daddy," she said, as she placed her hand upon his shoulder, "you're not sorry that those bottles were broken, are you?"

"I guess not, girlie."

"But you're not, are you, Daddy?"

"No; but you must not forget that him and me are partners again."

"Yes, I suppose that is so. It may be that you can't do anything, Daddy; but I just wish that he wouldn't come around any more."

"I am sorry, girlie, but we'll have to bide him a bit."

"And when you sell, I'm to go to the Ladies' Academy."

"Yes, girl."

"You know, Daddy, that was what mother wished. She wanted me to be a lady."

"But you are a lady now, girlie."

"Yes, I know. But the other kind of a lady."

"I'll let you go if you want to. It'll be—it'll be pretty lonely, but——"

"I won't leave you for very long, Daddy, and I'll write you every day."

"All right, girlie. I know that it is best."

"And you are not angry at my doing what I did, are you?" She reached up and kissed him.

TEMPTATION AND TWO ON THE TRAIL

"No, girly—only—only I don't quite see what you did it for."

For a moment she turned and looked at Godfrey. Would she tell him the truth? She thought for a moment. No, she would say nothing. She must not tell him.

"I just couldn't leave them lying around—I just couldn't, Daddy."

"There—there—kiss your daddy and run along. Bless your heart, how much like your mother you are, girl—how much like——"

"That's a great compliment, Daddy—and there's another kiss."

"And say," he whispered in conclusion, "don't you get caring too much for that fellow without his caring. Can't never tell about these town chaps."

"Why—why, Daddy?"

"Never mind. Run right along now. I'll have the supper ready when you come back."

She waved him a farewell kiss and hurried on to where Godfrey was waiting. At a turn in the road they looked back and saw him sitting by the rose-scented mound under the pines, his form bent over and his head bowed low.

CHAPTER XIX

WAR IS DECLARED

LATE one afternoon a tall, slim young man with dark eyes and hair walked quickly down the main street of the Crossing. The stage had just arrived. He stepped into the Alhambra, and ascended the stairs to Pete Turpin's apartments. Without knocking, he opened the door and entered.

Pete was not in. He sat down for a time, rose, walked to the window, and stood there, silent, immobile, looking out into the street.

In the sky above, a small white cloud—shimmering—a wavy white mist—shifted about in the sea of blue. A pigeon flew past the window, breast spotless, tips coloured, wings twittering, and finally nestled in its little home on the roof of a near-by barn. A six-horse freight wagon with trailer—a ponderous affair—rumbled past, clattering, clanging, rattling, the driver in khaki suit and cowboy hat, whirling

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a long whip which he cracked incessantly. On the other side of the street a group of "spifficated" humans were coming out of a saloon, staggering, falling, rising, hurling oaths at each other, cursing their luck, damning their Maker, swearing because they held so much, and bemoaning that they could hold no more.

"Poor devils!" he muttered. "What fools!"

He sat down again and waited rather impatiently for Pete's coming. When he came in Pete greeted him with delight. Dick was about the only thing on earth he loved unselfishly. At the end of an hour Dick left him, went down to a stable and hired a saddle horse to take him to Pine Ridge. When he came back later in the evening he sought Pete at once.

"Well," said Pete, "have you seen her?"

"Yes," answered Dick, slowly, "and I can't think what's wrong. She gave me back my ring."

"What are you going to do?"

"Don't know. I wanted to see you first. I thought that you might know some reason."

"None at all. But don't lose any time. No doubt it's merely a whim. She'll come around. She'll have to. Jack can't permit her to make

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a fool of herself. Go down to Cameron's tomorrow and hire the swellest turnout in the place. A woman likes to be impressed—don't be afraid to spend a little. And if you need money—you know that, why, you do need it—you young cub—I can tell it by your look. Well, let's have it. How much?"

The figure named was surprisingly large. Pete looked into the young man's eyes. He noted there the tell-tale evidences of dissipation.

"My boy!" he warned him, "it's not the money. I want you to have a good time and more pleasure than I had in my young days. But there is a limit, Dicky, boy. I don't want you to sow too many wild oats."

When Dick returned to Pete's rooms the next evening he was anything but cheerful.

"Well," said Pete, "I suppose that you fixed it up."

"No," admitted Dick slowly. "She was adamant—wouldn't listen. I don't understand it at all."

Pete was puzzled. Things were not working out right. The family pride was touched, and he was more than ever determined on the match. He would have to talk to Lorimer. And by virtue of her refusal Eula had taken on a new value in his eyes.

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Dick slept little that night. For the first time he saw his folly in its true light. He was tired of his flirtation with Blanche. She had been getting exacting, and the liaison had become embarrassing. In some unaccountable way it seemed to be throwing a thin, dark trail, like a shadow, over his life.

But there was more than that. He knew that the side of him that was best and truest still loved his girlish playmate. He had never rated her at her true value, and now after a year or so of foolishness he was to pay. But there was still more. He could not define it altogether, but it was clear that she had grown away from him. She had acquired a depth—a quality of perception that puzzled him. As he talked with her he knew that she was quietly appraising him, finding him wanting.

He wished that he could fling back the curtain that the years had drawn. He had been careless, blind. He had taken her acquiescence as a matter of course. To his blind eyes the simplicity had hidden the beauty. Now he found in this mountain girl, supreme in her inviolate, pristine maidenhood—a welcome, refreshing, spring-song radiance which blossomed with a fragrance that was at once fresh, piquant, beautiful. But not for him. No, not for him.

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He made further attempts. Pete talked with Lorimer. But it was useless. After a week it became plain to them both that there was not going to be any compromise. Pete was furious and vowed that they would suffer. And almost immediately he began to put down the screws.

His first move was to inform Lorimer that he would put up no more money to develop the Silver Cloud, and gave him six days to find a means of paying back what he had borrowed. Lorimer hesitated, and then with that spirit of adventure which had always animated him, he placed a short term mortgage on the homestead for all he could raise, and kept a gang of men at work on the Silver Cloud. But a little later Pete purchased the mortgage from the money-lender, determined to have his pound of flesh when the mortgage matured in the winter.

Things were coming to a head. War had been declared.

CHAPTER XX

THE PERFECT DAY

DAYS passed, grew into weeks—a month went by. In that month Godfrey was admitted to the bar and taken into partnership.

Almost immediately he began to attract attention. He possessed a keen, analytic mind, saw into a situation quickly, and massed his pros and cons with precision. Perhaps the most significant element in his first successes was that the judge of the circuit court appeared to have formed a habit of agreeing with his conclusions. On several occasions he delivered addresses in the Crossing court room that were worthy of a more distinguished assemblage. Judge Manson said that he was bound to rise—that he would go far unless—— But the judge never got any farther. He had known his father intimately.

Legal business took him away to another town for a period. There were several weeks when Pine Ridge knew him not.

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Eula knew how he loved those mountain trips, and wondered why. She did not know the real reason for his absence.

On a bright June day she raced out into the hills. She was lonely. Her father was worried. Things were not going well at the mine. Life seemed to have become a very empty thing. She had never been in such a mood before. She would have to find some new interest. If the Shepherd were only back he could help her. He always seemed to know what to do.

On a hill-top she paused, dismounted, let the pony roam about, and threw herself on the grass. But she soon tired of the company of her thoughts. The day lost its charm—the mountains their lure. She tried a diversion. Like a beautiful, wild thing of the woods she stretched out on the grassy turf, peered up at the blue sky through the green canopy of the forest above her, and began to dream maiden dreams that are as old as the old world itself.

But she wearied of dreamland. The knight had not appeared. The castle was not visible in the distance. She rose to her feet, stretched her arms above her head, and glanced down into the valley below.

Something arrested her attention. Below Pine Ridge a horseman was coming up the road.

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He tied his pony at the gate and went to the house. Turned away disappointed, he lingered at the gate. Her heart began to beat quickly. She wondered which way he would turn.

He seemed to be a long time in deciding. But when he mounted he directed the pony in a direction that would not lead to the Crossing. She surveyed her point of vantage and found that it commanded the trail. No one could pass without seeing her. Twenty minutes later Godfrey discovered the white figure among the trees.

"Why, I've been looking for you everywhere," he told her, as he held out his hand in greeting. "I've been away for weeks—just got back to-day."

"And you never imagined that your friends would miss you, of course. Really, you will have to explain."

As he seated himself on the grass beside her she noted the strong, clean features. She recalled that other day. He must have exaggerated the struggle. It did not seem possible that such a man could fail.

At first they talked of the most matter-of-fact things—the beauty of the day, the progress of the camp, the work at the mine and the continued absence of the Shepherd. She fashioned a bouquet of wild flowers and handed them to

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him with a smile. Their hands met in the transfer—just the slightest contact. But it was enough to start a current darting through, thrill on thrill.

He told her of his trip, of his work, of his part in the defence of an innocent man, his interest in the outcome, his hope that justice would prevail. And then he struck a deeper note.

It was the old plaint of the man who succeeds, the desire to have someone with whom he may share his success. She did not raise her eyes as he spoke. Then from the general he drifted to the specific. He told her that he loved her. He wondered if he could teach her to love him?

For a time she had felt that this was coming, and she was not altogether unprepared. But she felt a little resentment on account of his recent neglect. She hesitated. He grew impatient, pressed for an answer, some little encouragement. She shook her head.

“But couldn’t you learn to care?”

“No,” she told him.

“Is that final?”

“Yes,” she answered, but she turned to him with laughter in her eyes.

He was hurt. The look in his eyes chased her laughter away. She became serious at once.

“Oh, don’t you see? It was—oh, I shouldn’t have put it that way. But it’s true. You can’t

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teach me to care. These last days have made it all clear. I care now."

He felt like shouting. He wanted the whole world to know. He reached over, took her in his arms and kissed her on the lips.

"You'll have to be very good to me," she told him. "I'm only a little girl—just a little mountain girl, after all—you mustn't forget that. And I've given myself to you—all of me—just in a minute. And all my life long—no matter what happens to me—I'll never be able to take back what I give. I guess that's what love means—giving for ever—for eternity. Oh, I don't know—I can't tell—but lately I seem to be a little bit of myself and a whole lot of you."

It became a day of delight. Towards evening they climbed to the summit of the Giant's Head and ate their lunch. And sitting there, dreaming of the future that was to be theirs, they waited until the moon rose. Then they made their way back to the ponies and galloped towards Pine Ridge. They parted near the garden gate.

"Just one," she whispered, as he bent over her. But there is no record that he took any note of her request.

He was almost in the saddle when Jack Lorimer came out, and of course he had to be told.

They could see that he was pleased, but he was

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very serious about it. There seemed to be something troubling him. He led them into the sitting-room and stopped before the picture of the helpmeet who had left him behind seven years before.

“Young man,” he said, “I guess I’m not of an awful lot of account—never—nohow. But at the very last she told me that I had always made her the happiest woman in the world. Now, this little girl is all I’ve got—and you—you’ve got to be good to her. When her time comes I trust she may be able to repeat her mother’s words.”

The tears welled up in his eyes, and choked with emotion he rushed from the room.

Eula walked with Godfrey down to the lower gate. This meant the formalities of another farewell.

“Oh, no—you—you mustn’t leave me—not again,” she protested. “Not after all that has happened to-day. It’s been a great day—hasn’t it?—a wonderful—a perfect day. And it’s all been due to you. Thank you for it so much. But I am going back now to sleep and to dream—to dream of you. Isn’t that enough? And Godfrey—just this one thing more—bend lower, please—I want to whisper it. I know what you have to fight—and I am going to help you always—now—and for ever—oh, you mustn’t, dear—not any more—yes, dear—always—good-bye—goodnight.”

CHAPTER XXI

A FEW NIGHTS AFTER

TO the lovers the days that followed were a carnival of delight. They lived in the present only. The past was forgotten. Little thought was given to the future. But future events sometimes cast their shadows before. Here and there a shadow flickered across their path.

Eula's love was like the rank, fertile growth of a forest flower that springs up quickly and roots deep. Her love became her world. She gave her lover the total of the sweet fullness of her intense, passionate nature. The affair with Dick no longer puzzled her. It had been nothing more than a friendly comradeship, while this other thing flooded the whole horizon. Since her mother's death she had lived for her father and herself, but now she found herself pouring a wealth of affection and interest into the heart and core of another life. And the strange thing about it was that the more she gave the more she had to give.

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Godfrey was overwhelmed with the confidence that he found placed with him. The surrender was so complete that he felt his obligation to be a sacred and holy thing.

Jack Lorimer had the misfortune to get his foot crushed in the mine and was obliged to go to the hospital. Mrs. Maylor, who had taken quite a fancy to the girl, insisted that Eula should come down to the Crossing and stay with her. This threw the lovers much together. And it was then that the first shadow appeared.

William Simms, manager of the Canada National Bank in the Crossing, was a very popular figure in its commercial and social life. With his young wife he occupied a cottage on the hill, close to the Maylors'. He had the same handicap as Godfrey, minus the latter's will-power. Worse than that, he had not come to realize his position until recently. It had gone pretty far. A trip east, and consultation with specialists had at last made the position clear. Disease had gripped him. Barring the improbable, his days amid the enthusiasm of Crossing life were pretty well numbered. His wife knew how slender the chance was, and it was breaking her heart. A babe had come into their home that summer and she had hoped for a time. But the baby's hands chained the father but a very short

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period. Within two months he was back to the doubtful pleasures of his old haunts.

Annie Maylor and Florence Simms had become close friends, and the younger woman frequently confided in the older. Sometimes they discussed the problem. But these discussions never seemed to lead anywhere. And of late Mrs. Maylor had become very sensitive. Her own husband had formed a habit of coming home in the small hours of the morning.

On the night that the shadow first appeared Samuel Maylor was down town, Godfrey was in his room, while Eula and Mrs. Maylor were in the sitting-room, mastering the intricacies of some new embroidery. A new stitch was particularly aggravating. At last Eula gave it up, stretched her arms upward, smiled in response to the look thrown towards her, and decided that it was time for bed. She returned to the sitting-room a few minutes later in dressing-gown and slippers, and found Mrs. Maylor standing before the fire, a puzzled look in her eyes. She walked up to her, threw her arm around her neck carelessly, and made a chance remark about the fire—the curl of the flame. Mrs. Maylor turned towards her with tears in her eyes.

“What is it?” asked Eula.

“My girl—I can’t tell you—not just now.”

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She straightened, dried her tears. "Oh, it was nothing. It will pass."

And that was all that she would say. She had found out something that morning, had stumbled upon it. And to herself she kept repeating, "My husband—Sam—gambling—an elder at old St. Andrew's—and now—oh, how can it be?—it's the greed—the thirst for gold that gets hold of people in this wild, new country."

Eula was in a quandary. She was shut out, and it hurt her. What could have happened to her friend? Then it would appear that she seemed to divine.

"Auntie," she whispered, "you should be more severe. When Godfrey and I get married I'll make him stay at home."

"Judging by his habits that will not be hard," said Mrs. Maylor, smiling. "He hasn't been away from the house a single evening for a week."

"Well, I am training him in the right way," laughed the girl. "But I have a notion to send him down town to bring Mr. Maylor home. Shall I?"

"Mercy no, girl! Why should you do that?"

"Oh, I would just like to talk to him straight for a minute—tell him what he ought to do."

Annie Maylor laughed merrily. Then there was a knock at the door. Mrs. Simms was ushered in.

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She was in trouble. Billy had not come home. She wondered if Mrs. Maylor would walk down town with her and see if—if—she burst into tears. She had never gone for her husband before, she told them, but she had thought that it might awaken him, help to resurrect his dead self.

They would not hear of it. It would not do. And Eula was sure that Godfrey would be glad to go. She went to find him, and he accepted the assignment as a matter of course. Mrs. Maylor was not so sure—she would rather have gone herself. But she said nothing. Godfrey set out.

After an hour's waiting there was no sign of Godfrey or the young banker, and Mrs. Maylor walked home with her visitor. Eula was left alone in the big house.

She felt lonely and tripped out on to the veranda. A moon was creeping up. Below her the lights of the town glistened in the darkness. She listened intently, anticipating the sound of the familiar footfall. He should not be very long now.

But the weary hours dragged on and still he did not come. Then with a shock it came to her what she had done. She had thrown him in the way of temptation. Why had she let him go?

Mrs. Maylor returned, and they sat by the open fire for an hour, talking quietly. The very air seemed to be charged with something ominous.

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Finally, tired of waiting, they went to bed, but not to sleep. Then at last, over-weary, slumber came to Eula. But Mrs. Maylor did not sleep.

And the hours dragged on and still he did not come.

At last there was the sound of carriage wheels upon the roadway. Then the carriage stopped—opposite the house, too. Two figures appeared on the walk. One walked erect, but the other—and the younger of the two—had to be supported. Dry-eyed and fearing, Mrs. Maylor met them in the hallway. She took in the situation at a glance.

“Oh, Eula, my girl!” she whispered to herself. “You made a mistake—a great mistake. You shouldn’t have asked him to go.”

* * * * *

The Prodigal was in his room—had gone to sleep. Mrs. Maylor tripped to his door and listened. He was talking—half incoherently. She turned the knob, opened the door—quietly—slowly. The room was dark. She walked in.

She turned on the light. He lay just as they had left him, the hair somewhat dishevelled, the eyes a little bloodshot, the face flushed.

She smoothed his forehead with her hand and

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bent down. He was whispering—talking to the mother he had never had.

“I just couldn’t help it. I found them, but they would not come. Then they insisted that I have something—just a lemonade—something soft. And they drugged it—I know they did—and something seemed to be on fire all at once. And after that—I don’t seem to remember—and Eula—oh, I’ll lose her now.”

“Never!” whispered a soft voice, and Mrs. Maylor turned around to find Eula at her side.

The whispering ceased—the movement of the lips stopped. He became quiet. Eula bent down and kissed him, smoothed his fevered brow, and hurriedly left the room.

In the grey dawn of the following morning a lone figure slipped out from the Maylor home. He took a back street and started towards the hills. A moment later a figure in night attire appeared at a window. The active brain was at work. She turned back into her room, dressed quickly, and hurried after him.

When Mrs. Maylor rose she went to Godfrey’s room first and found no one there. Then she rushed to Eula’s room and found it vacant also. She was alarmed. She knew how they cared, and she couldn’t trust them. If they would only wait.

They came back in time for a late breakfast.

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The walk had done him good. To see his face one would think that the happenings of the night before were but a vague dream. The night had left its mark, but hope shone in the eyes of both.

After breakfast Mrs. Maylor followed Eula to her room.

"My child," she whispered, "what have you done?"

"Oh, we just went for a walk. I saw Godfrey going and I couldn't let him go alone—not after what had happened. And then I—I—wanted him to marry me to-day—and he wouldn't."

"Eula — my child — don't you know that——?"

"Now you mustn't—don't look at me like that. He needs me, and I know it."

Mrs. Maylor was amazed. This girl had grown into a woman in a night.

"My child—listen—you don't know—you can't realize. Some day you will thank him for knowing best."

"Perhaps—but you see—it's him—Godfrey—and that makes the difference. And I love him—I love him so—and I just couldn't stand it—seeing him suffering—and oh, Auntie, dear—I'm all at sea—do tell me what to do."

She burst into tears and threw herself in Mrs. Maylor's arms.

CHAPTER XXII

EMMETT BREAKS WITH MAYLOR

AN adjustment had made itself apparent in the life of the Crossing. The pink of the boom was over. Each man had begun to work out his problem, according as the luck of the rush had prospered him.

Those who had made real finds were busy digging out the stuff. Those who had found nothing but country rock drew pay cheques from those who had been more lucky. They swung hammers, held drills, and bent their backs over mucksticks. Others were still working on stray prospects, hoping with the hope that in the heart of the true man of the hills never, never dies.

Among the ranks of those who lived less strenuously there had been a shaking-up. The man who had blundered at making a clean up with a jackpot went back to work. The amateur who made a mess of mixing toddies graduated into overalls once more.

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The camp appeared to be on a more solid basis. The tent town had disappeared. Shacks were not so numerous and some were adorned with a coat of paint. A few of the more ambitious business men had erected brick blocks. A number of pretentious homes dotted the hillside.

Billy Simms was dead. After staying down town for a whole week-end he came home for the last time. When he went forth again the carriage in which he rode had black plumes fluttering in the breeze above. A woman in the carriage behind was crying as though her heart would break.

A few hours later Mrs. Maylor went over to the house of mourning. But she found that she could be of little use. The young widow had closed herself up in her room, refusing to see any one. She came home with fear tugging at her heart.

A few evenings later a strange company were gathered in Maylor's private office. The blinds were drawn. The room was but dimly lighted. The hour was nine o'clock.

Those present numbered Jack Madderley, head foreman for the Amalgamated Mining Company, a wealthy corporation, who employed about one thousand men at their various plants; Mat Hickson, a professional gambler; John

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Mason, a saloon keeper and a member of the town council; Andrew Langdon, Chief of Police; Sam Johnson, a saloon keeper, and a member of the town council; John Datson, a professional gambler; Joseph Princeton, a saloon keeper and a member of the town council; Pete Turpin, whom we already know; Frank Ross, editor of the *Crossing News*; and lastly, Maylor and B. C. James, the Superintendent of the Amalgamated. The general offices of that concern were in New York.

It will be at once apparent that a session of the Crossing "ring" was in progress. Like most rings, its purpose was a benevolent one. The average run of the miners and muckers did not know how to make use of their money. It was in the public interest that institutions should be provided for taking care of the hard-earned wages of the miner and the prospector in order that they should be beneficially circulated. Otherwise the money might find its way into a savings bank, where it could be drawn when it was wanted, and thus place the owner of the pass book in a position where he might be able to finance the purchase of a home or make a start in business. This, of course, was most absurd. Or, on the other hand, their accumulated funds might be used to furnish

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the wherewithal for an occasional holiday trip, and thus assist to increase the wealth of a distant town or city and incidentally help to keep the wheels of transportation moving. This was not to be thought of, and must be prevented at all costs. It would be fatal to the highest success of such highly desirable Crossing institutions as the Flowing Bowl and the Gaming Table and the Red Light. Large sums were invested in these gilded palaces, and vested interests must be protected.

But there was one way in which the operations of the Crossing "ring" differed from most rings of a similar character. The others dared no more than lure. This ring had now determined to force.

James and his foreman controlled the employment of hundreds of men. At a word it was quite an easy matter to dispense with the services of an employee who had failed to discern the wisdom of patronizing those benevolent institutions whose sole reason for existence was the opportunity for entertainment that they provided. But a new difficulty had arisen. A large number of the miners had begun to form the habit of getting the savings bank to cash their cheques instead of the barkeeper. And worse than that, they actually left the money

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on deposit instead of making a generous distribution.

Such a condition, if it were permitted to continue, was liable to ruin the gentlemen who had invested such large sums in a number of splendid palaces of entertainment. Something must be done about it. They had now met to do that something.

It was plain to be seen that Maylor did not have very much love for his new friends, but he had sold at a price and the transaction must be completed.

Johnson was the first speaker. He was a stout man with a big neck, a red face, and a generous forward protuberance. He drank heavily and was seldom sober. In fact, he was the best customer but one the Flowing Bowl could boast.

He dwelt at length on the serious condition of affairs which had developed. The men were not spending their money as of yore. Bank books were popular in a sense that was both disquieting and disgusting. The last pay day he had drawn a large sum for cashing cheques, and only a fraction of it had been employed. The old haunts had lost their lure. The old crowd were being displaced. New men with less liberal ideas were at work in the mines.

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And the prosperity of the Crossing depended on its continuing as a "spending" town.

The others expressed similar opinions. They could arrange through Madderley and James that those who did not spend should no longer work. In addition, the money must be spent in saloons controlled by the ring. Of what advantage would it be if, instead of the Green Dragon and the Flowing Bowl and the Red Light, the men decided to patronize the Blue Flame?

While this conference was in progress Emmett dropped into the other room. He recognized the voices and heard the whole sordid plot. He called Maylor out.

"You mustn't do this—you can't," insisted Godfrey.

The answer was surprisingly frank.

"Once I thought that I couldn't. Now I know that I can't do anything else. Oh, I've got entangled—bound hand and foot. And it would be done whether I mix in it or not. They control the council without me. Besides, I won't stay with it very long. In a few years I will be able to retire."

For a full ten minutes they argued the point, neither abating one jot from their position. Maylor went back into the inner room.

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Godfrey sat down and thought it all out. It took him but a few minutes to put his decision on paper. He walked into the bandit room and handed it to Maylor. It was a formal notice of his withdrawal from the firm.

"Godfrey—you mustn't—you can't," gasped Maylor, huskily. His tone showed that this young man had come to mean a good deal to him, too.

"I must unless——!"

"Unless what?"

"Unless you withdraw from——!" and he glanced at the group around the room. "I can't permit a partner in a firm which carries my name to get mixed up in a deal like this. You will have to decide. I am sorry, but my mind is made up."

The group in the room began to realize what was happening. Turpin watched Maylor with keen, piercing eyes. Maylor glanced up and caught his forbidding look. Emmett saw what happened. He understood who was the master and who the servant.

He walked out of the room, out of the office, out of the firm, and very largely, out of Maylor's life.

As they were clearing up some details of the

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withdrawal from the partnership on the following day, Emmett made his position clear.

"It's like this," he said, quietly, and there was no mistaking the serious note, "you know why I came here—what I came for. Now you have treated me like a son, while Mrs. Maylor has become the only mother I ever had. I think I have made some progress, despite the incident a few nights ago. But my continued association with you brings me more or less in contact with those others. And that means temptation which I must avoid.

"But there is more than that. I am going to speak plainly. If it hurts you, remember that it hurts me more to bring such an accusation against you. There are hundreds of fine fellows in this country who are being dragged down to the gutter by your new friends. You are prostituting yourself—your fine abilities—for the gold that it brings. And answer me this—when the purpose is immoral, how much difference is there between the woman who sells her body and the man who sells his brain—his power of decision—of action? Now I want to be sure that any move I make is going to help the other fellow up."

Maylor was silent. Godfrey held out his hand in farewell.

EMMETT BREAKS WITH MAYLOR

“Good-bye—my boy,” said Maylor, “you’ve got good stuff.”

When Godfrey told Mrs. Maylor that he was going she burst into tears, and begged him to remain at the house. But he showed her how this would be impossible.

“What are you going to do ? ” she asked him.

“I am going to open up an office of my own.”

“But can you make it pay ? It will be very hard for you to get corporation business now, and Sam says there is very little money in anything else.”

“That is quite true. But I am going to make a speciality of handling damage suits for the miners. At present they seldom get a square deal. I’ll stand by them. I think they will stand by me.”

CHAPTER XXIII

THE BANQUET

ABOUT a week later James came into Maylor's office in a much-perturbed mood.

"Maylor," said he, "we've done it now. And it's liable to cost me my job and the Amalgamated more than a half-million dollars."

"Why don't you make it more," laughed Maylor. "But go on. You make me excited."

"Well, you will get excited when you hear me through. You know what we have been doing at the Boundary Star!"

"Yes."

"You know how the lead dips into the Jonas fraction, which was owned by an estate, entailed, and in a shape that we couldn't buy. We tried to, but without success. And since the new law came into force which provides that we cannot follow a lead, and that the boundary of a claim goes straight down, we have taken out

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more than a half-million dollars-worth illegally—stuff that under the new law belongs to the Jonas claim. The heir to the estate, a young fellow named Manson, has come of age. He arrived in town a few days ago, and has placed the matter in Emmett's hands. Now Emmett is just smart enough to pull a thing like that off. And he is in the position of having inside knowledge which might be hard for any other lawyer to obtain. Better look into the legal position and give me an answer to-morrow. Of course, we will fight it."

Maylor did look into it and had to admit the gravity of the situation. If the courts upheld the new act, which, by the way, had not been tested, the Amalgamated would have to pay heavy damages. But from the company's standpoint there was another aspect. The surplus profits derived from mining stolen ore had been paid out in handsome dividends. The leads on the Amalgamated properties were beginning to pinch, and if Manson secured a judgment for a large amount it would likely mean a receivership.

"We've got to get rid of him—Emmett," said James emphatically. "He's too darned clever. If the suit goes against the company the directors would blame me and I'd lose

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both my job and my reputation. You see, I've stolen for them and they would have to find a goat."

"Well, what can you do?"

"Emmett has one weakness. I thought that we might get him that way."

Maylor was silent.

"I had thought of a little banquet," James went on, "which I don't think would be hard to arrange. Young Manson, the owner of the Jonas, is a temperance crank—thinks this is an awful country. He would drop Emmett like a hot potato if he——!"

Maylor was still silent.

"You see—he has just started for himself. What could be more appropriate than that a few friends should get up a little dinner?"

"A few friends?"

"Yes, that is—Heavens, Maylor—how literal you are. I do believe that you like that kid yet?"

"I do. I've got to admit it. He is keeping clear. I am already embroiled. James, you will have to do this thing alone. I can't stand for it."

James left Maylor and went to see John Marks, president and principal stockholder in the Boundary Commercial Company, a large mercantile concern. Marks was another tool

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of the Amalgamated. The sales of his concern to the big mining company ran into enormous figures every month. James was drawing a very large secret commission for placing the orders.

Marks was not busy for the moment, and they talked freely—almost idly for a time. The weather, always a fruitful theme, furnished one of the topics. But James gradually edged away from that.

It may be said just here that the ring had not permitted the real reason for Emmett's retirement to leak out. Godfrey had said nothing himself.

"I have been thinking," said James, "that it would be a nice thing for a few of us to arrange a little dinner for young Emmett. He has just started up for himself and I think that he would appreciate it. It seems that Maylor has given him a hard crack. If a few friends would rally round him—cheer him up—it might do him a lot of good."

"Capital!" returned Marks. "Capital! We must fix it up right away."

"Very well. I will leave the details in your hands. I will rely on you. I am rather busy myself."

It was not easy to secure Godfrey's consent. But James kept in the background, and the men

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behind the proposal seemed to be so sincere, and the movement on their part appeared to be so spontaneous—the natural result of big-heartedness and good-fellowship, that he could no longer doubt.

The evening arrived. James did not come. The dinner was excellent and the usual appendages were furnished. And all through the dinner Godfrey was battling a losing fight. These were his friends. This kind act was proof. They would drink his toast a little later on and it would never do to . . . to . . . The exact word would not come.

Three hours later he met an elderly man as he reached the street after leaving the banquet-room. Lorimer looked at him closely, then grasped him by the arm and walked with him to his room.

Under a glaring light a young man met them, was startled at what he thought he saw, and peered again. The client had recognized his lawyer. The ring had builded better than they knew.

“Emmett!” he muttered to himself, and walked on. “What a tragedy. A man with a brain like his. But if he is like that he isn’t safe. I guess I’ll have to make a change.”

Manson made the change. The interview with Emmett was a rather painful one. Godfrey

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made one plea, but Manson was obdurate. He walked across the street and placed his case in the hands of Corson, a fussing, pettifogging old lawyer who would never become a K.C.

That same evening Godfrey rode out to Pine Ridge. He found that Lorimer had said nothing.

"I couldn't let her know," the prospector told him. "Besides, I knew that your high sense of honour was obligation enough."

He walked into the sitting-room and calmly waited for her to come. It was going to be harder than he had thought.

She had prepared for his visit by wearing a new gown of velvet and lace which fitted her like a glove. The neck was cut low and every curve and line seemed to stand out. In such a gown she was strikingly beautiful. Oh, why was she making it harder for him?

She came up to him with arms outstretched, her eyes bright. He wanted to take her in his arms, crush her to him, and whisper over and over again that they belonged to each other for ever and for ever. Instead, he fought for self-control. An exclamation that was more like a groan broke from him. How could he give her up? The look of suffering on his face alarmed her. Something had gone wrong.

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"Godfrey," she whispered. "What is the matter?—what has happened?"

He steeled his resolution, and gently, quietly, told her the story. He did not hold himself blameless, even though he knew now that he had been trapped. He insisted that he must give her up.

She protested, threw herself in his arms, and begged him to take her. It was such a little slip. Would he sacrifice their happiness for that?

But he was obdurate and held to the high ground that he had maintained.

She burst from him and faced him with passion in voice and gesture.

"Oh, you men—you creatures!" she cried vehemently. "You make us love you—carry us away in spite of ourselves. And then you come and suggest that it is a matter of mathematics—that we go back to where we were before. And just because you have weighed the pro and con. and have decided that—oh, can't you see that we are creatures of flesh and blood—we women who love—not things of dust and ashes."

Her outburst set his blood on fire. He was at her side in a moment, folded her in his arms, kissed her on cheek and lips and brow, and held her to him as though he would never let her go.

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"Is it—is it true?" he whispered, with his face down to hers. "Am I—am I like ashes?"

And while she sobbed in his arms he made clear the only open path he saw ahead. This thing that had gripped him must be conquered. He could not win his place in the world until he had crushed it beneath his feet. He would always love her, but he dare not hold her bound. If he were to do so, and the way became long and lonely, there would come a time when she would hate him even as she loved him now. When he had fought his fight and won his victory he would come back to her. But she must remain free.

"I'll never be free while you love me," she told him, "never."

"Oh, Eula, how can you doubt? You know I will always love you."

"Yes, I know. You are like that."

He left her then, and even as he went away, she clung to him, sobbing out her grief upon his breast.

Before going home he went over to see the Shepherd. The latter had just returned. Godfrey found him in a strange, taciturn mood. He would not talk of his trip, but began to question Godfrey about himself—his malady and his battle. With a rare prescience he diagnosed his trouble.

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“Young man,” he said, “it is coming. I knew it would come. Sooner or later you will get back to essentials. Modern life is pretty much a cobweb of false standards. Everything is artificial. You must get back to the primitive, where man relies only upon nature. The very plague that curses you is a concoction. In its natural state and prepared under natural conditions the grain is the food of man. For his own profit and pleasure he has made a substitute which degrades and damns. One of these days you are going to rebel and flee.”

And while the Prodigal walked home in the moonlight a young girl lay stretched out on her couch in the sitting-room at Pine Ridge. Her breath came quickly and her bosom heaved as the sobs shook her. Life was teaching her, and the lesson was hard. Later, reason would force calmness, but just yet the heart was in control. This thing that had come to her, flooding her whole life with its light and glory, had gone too deep. She could not give her lover up.

But the blow had come, and the situation had to be faced. Long after her father had retired to rest she rose and looked long and earnestly at the face in the gilded frame on the wall.

“Ah, little mother—little mother,” she whispered, “how I wish that you were with me now!”

CHAPTER XXIV

INSULT AND TREACHERY

FOR a good many years Lorimer had owned a claim known as the Golden Crown, which adjoined the Silver Cloud on the north side. He had always considered it to be of very little value. The result was that when Turpin made him a handsome offer for it he was a very much surprised man.

In return for the claim Pete offered to write out a discharge of the mortgage on the homestead, pay all the Silver Cloud debts, and give him a substantial sum in addition. Since the Silver Cloud had turned out so badly Lorimer had considered the Golden Crown absolutely worthless. And now to be offered the equivalent of a very respectable fortune was like a breath of prosperity out of another world.

They were sitting on the porch at Pine Ridge. Pete was watching him closely, and he very carefully concealed his delighted astonishment.

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Rising to his feet, he looked off into the distance. For a full minute he stood there, quiet, silent, apparently contemplating the dullness of the autumn day, but really trying to comprehend why it was that Pete was willing to offer him so much for a worthless mine. He determined to probe.

"It's not much for a claim that I have held as long as I have the Golden Crown," he remarked, quietly, as he turned around and faced Pete.

"Yes, but it's a mischief of a big price to pay for taking a gambling chance that there's a pay streak somewhere in the granite. I'll be hanged if you hadn't ought to jump at it."

"What would you do with it if I sold it?"

"I fancy that would be my business, wouldn't it?"

"Quite true. And the selling is my business. I wouldn't think of it at that price—I won't sell."

It was Pete's turn to be astonished, and he veered to a different attitude.

"Well, seeing that you are cranky about it, I don't mind telling you that I had figured on sinking a shaft on the north side of the hill. It appears to me that there is a chance that I might strike the Queen vein." The Queen was a very valuable property just across the gulch.

"You have a half interest in the Silver Cloud now—why not buy the other half and tunnel in from that side?"

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"It wouldn't do. I would have to go too far."

"I hardly think so. But—let's see. You kept the boys working for a few days after I was hurt, didn't you?"

"Yes, I did—and a lot of good it done me. It kept on getting worse-looking all the time. At the last I got so plumb disgusted with the proposition that I went into the tunnel and told the boys to drill a set of long holes. As soon as they were done I loaded them myself—to h—l with the gelignite. You can easily imagine what happened. When the shots went off the whole face was broken down. You see, I had blowed so much money in that hanged hole that I wanted to break up the tunnel so bad that I would never be tempted to get mixed up with any kind of a proposition to start operations in that place again."

"And yet you are willing to take a chance on the other?"

"Well," returned Pete, laughing a little, "if you never venture you never win. And then," he went on, "I thought that putting it this way I might be helping you out."

Pete's directness, his frank way of putting it had a tendency to take Lorimer off his guard. And recently Pete had shown signs of a desire

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to be reconciled. There had been a note of genuine sincerity in his tone. Lorimer stuffed his hands in his pockets, spread his legs out wide, and thought it all over again.

"I'll take you up," he said finally. "You can get the papers made out right away."

Lorimer went to the back clearing to dig potatoes. Pete mounted his horse and rode up the trail leading past the Sheep Ranch. He was bound for a spot where prairie chickens were known to be plentiful.

About the middle of the afternoon Eula went over to the Shepherd's. On her way back she was overtaken by Pete. The latter was on his way home with a good bag of chickens and was in splendid humour. He got off his horse, walked by her side, chatting in his vigorous, egotistical way. And from time to time he kept regarding her with looks that she didn't like and didn't want to understand. When they arrived at the gate he untied a pair of blue grouse and followed her to the house.

"I'm going to leave these," he said, putting the birds on the table. And as he spoke he gave her another one of those looks that she didn't like and didn't want to understand.

She failed to thank him for his gift, but he did not notice the omission.

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He complained of being tired and said that he would like a cup of hot tea. She kindled the fire and in a few minutes placed a steaming cup on the table. He threw a meaning look towards the pantry, but she refused to take the hint.

"Seems funny that you don't treat a fellow a little bit decent," he grumbled.

He had thrown down the gauntlet and she took it up.

"I treat you," she replied, "in just the way that a girl should treat a friend of her father's that she doesn't like."

"Ho! ho! My fine lady! What's the matter now?"

"Just the same thing that has always been the matter."

"And what's that?"

"Well, you know, Pete Turpin," she reminded him sharply, "that I've never had one bit of use for you since you discovered that in the long run there wasn't nearly so much money in looking for pay streaks as there was in selling whisky, rolling tenderfeet, and doing a lot of other things that I shall not mention."

"Awh, shucks!" he exclaimed contemptuously, "a man has to make a living. And anyhow, I can't see the wrong of it when a fellow has the govermint for a partner and sharing in

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the swag. And it seems rather inconsistent of you to turn your nose up at money. If Emmett was an ordinary chap with ordinary prospects do you suppose that you'd have taken up with him the way you did? And do you suppose that he would have taken up with you if he hadn't thought that your dad was going to make a fortune out of a mine?"

She reeled as though he had struck her. But she recovered almost instantly.

"It's not true," she exclaimed indignantly. "Oh, how dare you insult me so?"

In her anger her eyes flashed and her face grew white. And as she stood before him thus he thought her more beautiful than ever. He rose from the table and came near her—very near—close. He spoke quickly, impulsively, and his words were loose and disconnected, but he made his meaning clear. And there was still that look in his eyes that she didn't like and didn't want to understand.

"My!" he began, "you—but—well, when you look like that I think what a fool Dick—but then—your dad's my pal and I—I say—girl for his—yes, for his——" He reached over, tried to kiss her. She slapped his face.

When Lorimer came home he was terribly angry—a white anger.

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“Can it be?” he exclaimed. “Did he really do that?”

The affirmative was definite, but the girl trembled. She had never seen her father so worked up.

After supper was over Lorimer went out without a word, walked quickly down to the barn and saddled his swiftest pony. Eula watched him from the window, and when he was ready she went down to the gate, a frightened look upon her face.

“Daddy,” she begged of him, “promise me that you won’t do anything—anything rash?”

“I promise,” he said quietly—a strange quietness that was in keeping with the stern, set features.

While he was away Eula tried very hard to keep from thinking about the thing that she really couldn’t help thinking about, with the result that she was thinking about it all the time, and didn’t go to sleep until after her father came home.

“Daddy,” she called from her room, “as she heard his step on the threshold, “are you all right?”

“Yes, girlie,” he replied. “I’m all right.”

But she was not satisfied. As they were sitting at breakfast the next morning she questioned him further.

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"Daddy," she said, "did you see Pete Turpin last night?"

"No," he replied frankly, "I did not."

But still she was not satisfied. There was a look in his eyes which told her everything she feared—he didn't need to say a word. However, she felt somewhat relieved when she saw him go to the potato patch in the clearing as he had done the day before. But when he came back at noon he was white and silent, and his eyes told her everything she feared.

After dinner was over he went down to the barn and saddled one of the ponies. Just as he was about to mount and start for the Crossing, Eula came running down the path and begged him not to go. But he was not to be turned from his purpose easily.

"But, Daddy," she persisted, "won't you promise not to go for—for my sake?"

"Why, girl—it's for your sake that I am going. Do you suppose that I am going to let that dirty sniveller insult you without showing him what's what?"

His words thrilled her but she knew that she must not let him go.

"I know, Daddy—I realize all that. But the real truth is that if you stay I have not been hurt so much as I will be hurt if you go."

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“What do you mean ?”

“I mean that if you go and meet Pete Turpin in the white anger you are in now, either you will kill him or he will kill you. And,” she added, as an after-thought, “I am not sure which would be the worst. If you survived the fight you could never evade the law.”

“Girlie, just leave your old dad to take care of himself,” was his answer. And as once more she read a purpose in his eyes she trembled anew. But it was no use. Five minutes of argument and counter-argument were of no benefit. He was still determined to go.

“Daddy,” she whispered as a last resort, while she looked over towards the pines. “Please—for her sake. She would not want me left alone, would she, Daddy ?”

This appeal was effective. He yielded, turned back, and went towards the potato patch in the clearing.

A few hours later Eula was sitting by the window sewing when she saw a tall man come riding up the road. He was riding very fast, and as he came near she could see that his horse was wet with foam. He stopped at the barn, tied his horse, and walked up to the house. It was none other than Bruce Jimmy. He came to the point at once.

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"Where's your father?" he asked.

She told him.

"I understand that he is about to sell the Golden Crown to Pete Turpin?"

"That is correct."

"Have the papers been signed yet?"

"No."

"You are quite sure?"

"Certain."

"Then tell him not to put a hand to a pen until he has taken a sample from that vein of quartz they struck at the end of the tunnel running from the Silver Cloud shaft, and nearest to the Golden Crown."

"Why should he do that?"

"Because there is some dark work going on. And if that crook of an assayer, Greasor, doesn't mind his punkins it'll be tar and feathers some of these nights as sure as eggs make chickens."

Being a miner's daughter she understood at once.

"Do you mean that the last report was a fake?"

"Yes, I do."

"Then how much does the ore really run?"

"I cannot say for certain, but I understand that it is around one hundred and fifty."

"And he reported three. I must go and tell Daddy right away." She picked up a shawl and

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threw it around her shoulders. "But do tell me?" she went on, "how you found out?"

"I have it from Three-finger John, a tinhorn who happens to have honest streaks. It seems that Greasor got on a drunk and spilled out a lot of talk that stood him in hand to keep tight in his face."

"Do you suppose that Pete has been in the game all along?"

"I hardly think so—in justice to him I must say that. It appears that Greasor sent out and tried to get some money, hoping to buy both claims himself. But he failed in that and seems to have got around Pete, somehow—probably found that things were not at their warmest between your dad and him. Leastways, it come to me that they had patched up a deal whereby Pete is to put up the money, Greasor is to share in the profits, and Jack is to be pushed out with a tenth of what he ought to have."

It was getting dusk, but Eula determined to go and see her father at once. Turpin might come up the lower road. And as she went there was joy in her heart. Oh, it was great—really wonderful! Daddy's reward had come at last. The shadow over his life had all but disappeared. Financially independent, he could defy Turpin. She had never been so happy in her life.

CHAPTER XXV

THE MEETING AT THE SHAFT-HOUSE

A SLIGHT breeze stirred throughout the woodland, answered with a murmuring rustle in the branches of the fir and pine. The evening shadows were falling and it would soon be dark. But as Eula rushed on, breathless and panting, she was oblivious to all this. She was conscious of only one fixed idea—that she was the bearer of wonderful news—an important message that would lift the shadow that had been over them and give her father the hard-earned success that the long years had denied.

But while she was speeding on through the timber things were happening around the shaft-house at the Silver Cloud. Development had been stopped some time before, but a few men were at work on a property near by, and they were using the mess-room and the bunk-house.

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They had just come off shift. As they went in to supper they noticed John Lorimer and Pete Turpin near the open shaft. They appeared to be much excited.

A stick of square timber, ten by ten, lay at the edge of the open shaft. It was one of a number that had been used in timbering a drift. A candle stuck in the windlass post lighted up the scene.

Lorimer stood close to the shaft, his back to the dark hole and his heels brushing against the timber. Turpin, with some papers in his hand, stood a little further away.

"You'll have to apologize on your knees," exclaimed Lorimer hotly, his eyes blazing. "If you don't divul the paper will I ever sign."

"Oh, cut that out," returned Pete fiercely. Half drunk when he had left the Crossing, he had taken three or four drinks on the way. He must keep braced up, he told himself. Consequently, he held enough—not only to make him reckless of deed and speech, but also to stimulate his brute courage to a dangerous degree.

"I stand by what I said," Lorimer replied. He looked Pete fair in the eye as he spoke. His

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tone was so ominously quiet that a wiser man than Pete would have taken warning.

"Why, it was nothing," affirmed Turpin. "A man can't help making up to a pretty girl. Besides, it has nothing to do with this mine deal. Now I came up this afternoon—knew I'd find you around here somewhere—to get this matter cleaned up. I wanted to prove to you that I am paying a big price for a small chance of winning. We've been through every shaft and tunnel and drift, and you know that what I say is true. There's only that one bit of quartz that's in any way promising—a deceiving bit it is—seeing that it only goes fifteen dollars to the ton. And with a narrow lead you know that ain't enough to pay for powder and drill sharpening."

"That makes no difference," returned John in the same ominously quiet tone. "You remember what I said."

Pete replied vigorously. He used any number of emphatic adjectives. And at the last he came closer and held his clenched fist under Lorimer's nose. But the latter did not move an inch. Not a muscle of his face twitched.

"Pete," he answered quietly, "the time has come when we must have a definite understanding. It would have been better if we

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had had it long ago. It seems just like yesterday since the time of the far-back past when we were like brothers—you and I. Then you began to make other friends and we gradually grew apart. I believe that I am in the right when I say that it was most your fault. Slowly you began to throw off the garb of manliness which had always made you such a likeable fellow as a partner. Finally, when we sold the Highland, you bought the Alhambra, and in the years that have elapsed you have made it more of a hell-hole than it was before.”

He hesitated a moment, and then went on. There was no mistaking the quiet emphasis in his tone.

“Pete, I ain’t never been no temperance crank, and I’m not the least bit sure that I have enough of the religion my wife had, and my girl has now, to get me a pass to a cloud chariot, but I do know that there is a powerful score a-mounting up against you. And as there is a God above, some day you’ll have to answer to Him for what you have done.”

“Oh, hush up on that pious stuff,” hissed Pete, losing his temper. But even though he tried to speak lightly, his lips trembled, his eyes swept about him uneasily, and his face

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went white with a whiteness that did not come from anger alone.

“But that’s not the particular thing I wanted to say,” John went on. “It is more serious than that. It has been said that in your wild career you have not hesitated to hold the virtue of the weaker sex as a thing to be played with and lightly cast aside. Granted that this is true—and I have reasons to believe that it is—I must not judge—a Higher Power will render judgment. But when you go so far as to try to do what you tried to yesterday it is a different matter. It wasn’t so much what you did, as the way you did it—not so much what you did as what you tried to do. And when you go so far as to insult my daughter—not so much what you did as what you tried to do—the crime greater because I am your partner—your old partner—and Eula my only child—then, by Heaven, I’ll have you know that you have to answer to me. Pete Turpin, damn you, I don’t know why it is I keep my hands off you.”

He stopped, and they stood a moment—looking into each other’s eyes. And in that moment each one of them read the purpose of the other.

Anger surged up in Turpin like a dart of flame. Almost before he realized what he was doing

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his arm swung out, and with his bare fist he struck Lorimer a terrific blow. The latter gasped for breath, reeled, tried to step backward to hold his balance, but his feet tripped on the stick of timber. The result was inevitable. A moment later he was lost to view in the darkness below the line of candle-light.

“Merciful Heaven!” exclaimed Pete hoarsely. “Why, I—I knocked him down the shaft. “Oh, John—John—my God—have I killed him?”

The men came from the bunk-house on the run. They had seen the quarrel and feared the result. Pete mounted his horse and fled through the timber, his form swaying from side to side.

Lorimer was laid out in the mess-house. The distance was not great, and they decided to carry him home. And that home-coming! Ah, that was the problem. How would they tell her?

Not a man of them felt that he could do it. They decided to send for the Shepherd. He would know what to do.

The man had been gone no more than a few minutes when they heard a soft sound echo through the woodland. They opened the door and listened. A girl was singing. She was

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coming down the trail towards the Silver Cloud. Strong and clear it came—clear as the chiming of a bell.

“Whispering Hope—
Oh, how welcome thy voice,
Making my heart
In its sorrow rejoice.”

O'Brien, a big Irishman, was standing in the doorway.

“It's her—Lorimer's girl—and she's singing. Father in Heaven, what are we going to do?” The appeal was a prayer.

She came on, still singing. The second verse was very clear—every word and note was distinct.

“If in the dusk of the twilight,
Dim be the region afar.
Will not the deepening shadows,
Brighten the glimmering star?
Wait till the darkness is over,
Wait till the tempest is done,
Hope for the sunshine to-morrow,
After the shower has gone.”

“Poor girl,” muttered McLennan, a Scotchman. “Hope—yes, that's it. And—my—how she will need it—need it all.”

“Hist!” whispered the other one of the three, Smith by name. “There's the chorus

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again—listen—now—oh, just think. Poor girl!
Poor girl!”

“Whispering Hope—
Oh, how welcome thy voice,
Making my heart
In its sorrow rejoice.”

She came to the shaft-house and stopped. She noticed the candle burning out in its socket and seemed puzzled. Then she came over to where they were.

“Have you seen Daddy?” she queried.

They dared not answer—could not. Not one of them could trust his voice, even if he could have thought of the right thing to say or the way to say it.

“What, what is wrong?—something has happened—has anybody been hurt?” Peering through the door, she had noticed the still form on the table inside.

Helpless, they made way for her. She would not be kept back. She rushed in.

“Oh, Daddy, dear,” she whispered. “You have been hurt—I know you have—and they are afraid to tell me. But they don’t know me—do they, Daddy? For I am a miner’s daughter—and—and now, Daddy, it is going to be all right—for I am here—here to nurse you, Daddy. And, Daddy, dear, there is such

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news—such wonderful news. Oh, Daddy—Daddy, dear—what—what is wrong—oh, Daddy—don't you—don't you hear ? ”

She bent over him, kissed him on the cheek, whispered in his ear, and then for the first time she noticed the bloody ooze coming from between his lips.

She turned to them in alarm.

“ Oh, what is wrong—and why don't you do something—and, oh, he will not speak to me—will not speak to me. There—I want to know—tell me, please. I'll promise to bear—to bear up if I can.”

And so they told her. She trembled a little at first, then pulled herself together, and heard O'Brien's brief story to the end. And when he was through she bent over the body, clasped her hands and gazed upward.

“ Dear God,” she petitioned, “ wilt Thou give me strength to do, wisdom to be, and knowledge to know. And in Thine own good time let Thy vengeance fall upon him who is the author of this deed.”

She rose up and, before turning away, looked once more on the beloved features.

“ Ah, you were a dear, good Daddy—right up to the last—and you did it for me—ah, you did it for me. How brave you were, Daddy—brave for me ! ”

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Then the Shepherd came.

As yet Eula had shed no tears. She stood among them, trembling and nervous, her heart beating with throbs of dull pain. She was trying to realize, to understand, to comprehend.

The Shepherd went up to her and pillowed her head upon his breast. With kindly sympathy he tried to comfort her.

“My daughter,” he whispered, gently, “the Fates have dealt hardly with thee. For a time all will be dark. You will not see clearly—neither will you be able to understand. Later on you will come to know that there is nothing in this world so evenly distributed as grief and sorrow. The few have much wealth, and the many have little; but all have vacant spots at the hearth and pain at the heart. Sooner or later Death comes. Perhaps because your trial has been great in the early years there may be an abundant peace when the white hairs adorn the brow and the dim eyes are turned towards the last sunset of all. In the depths of your grief remember Him who sweat drops of blood for our sakes as He agonized in the garden. Remember, also, how that in extremity He relied upon the promise of the Father. It is a great wrong that has been done thee—a very great wrong. May God avenge it speedily. And

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may the mellow fragrance of Infinite Compassion comfort and solace your sore heart."

She turned her face up toward his, tried to thank him, and then the tears came—a flood. She wept softly, her head upon his breast.

At a sign from the Shepherd the men lifted the stretcher and they began their lonely, mournful tramp to Pine Ridge. Once out of the mess-house, Eula gazed up at the inky blackness of the sky above, and from that dome above Hope beamed upon her. She saw the glistening glimmer of the first evening star.

* * * * *

A little more than three miles beyond the Silver Cloud a little-used trail winds its way along the side of a deep, rocky canyon. It is a very narrow trail, and none but a sure-footed pony would dare to attempt the passage. For to miss a footing would mean a flight into the rocky depths, three hundred feet below.

Beyond the canyon the trail climbs the divide which swings away to the Okanagan country on the hills beyond.

Along this narrow trail Pete, astride his half-exhausted pony, was winding his way in the darkness. He hoped to effect his escape by

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reaching the wooded country on the summit, and then by easy stages he could get across the line into Washington. Once there, he felt that he would not be easily caught.

But he had drunk too much—he knew that. That third bottle at the foot of the hill had done it. And he couldn't sit firm in the saddle. He swayed from side to side. And the pony went so slowly—too slowly. Mercilessly he drove in the spurs—urged it on.

Once, twice, thrice it stopped. It was becoming exhausted, having had neither food nor drink since noon. It was now nearing midnight. The pony stopped again.

Turpin got angry. What did the fool animal mean? He drove in the spurs and forced it on once more.

Then came the time when it could not plant its legs surely and firmly. The rocky trail got narrower. Pete got more impatient.

The pony's forefoot slipped, and it made an effort to draw back. Then its hind foot slipped also and it swung back and over. A few feet down Pete was flung free. Far into the rocky canyon below he plunged to endless night.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE PRAYER TO THE MYSTERY

N O sooner did the news of Lorimer's tragic death reach the Crossing than Mrs. Maylor sent a message to Emmett, requesting him to drive her out to Pine Ridge at once. They arrived a short time before midnight.

Eula met them on the threshold. Mrs. Maylor took her in her arms and whispered words of sympathy.

"Oh, thank—thank you," Eula answered, between her sobs. "Everybody is so kind."

And then Eula turned to Godfrey. She kissed him before them all, and as he bent over her, whispered softly, "Oh, I'm so glad you came—so glad you came—Godfrey, dear. Do you know that now you are all that I have left?"

They gathered about the fire. The Shepherd began to tell tales of the deeds of the man who was gone—the big-hearted man of the hills whom everybody loved.

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In after years, Godfrey remembered one of them in particular. It was the story of a man who had spread a ten-thousand dollar stake over a fortnight's revelry in the mire of the Crossing's red line. Turned out when his money was gone, Lorimer had found him lying in the gutter, blood marks on his face, his eyes black and his clothes torn.

He picked him up—and half carried him—for he was not able to walk by himself—to a boarding house where he paid his board for a week. Then he washed away the smear of dust and gore, got him some new clothes, and remained with him for the best part of a day. When he left him finally he gave him a few dollars—enough to keep him eating until he could find work.

“Ah! he was a big-hearted man,” said the Shepherd, “he was that.”

In the little circle sympathy permeated the whole atmosphere. The Shepherd glanced at Eula, his eyes telling enough. Godfrey gazed upon her, his eyes telling all.

Her hand rested on the arm of her chair. He reached over, covered and imprisoned it. She turned towards him. And as she looked at him, and noted the generous jaw, the firm set mouth and the clear, resolute lines of the face that had

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become so dear to her, it did not seem possible that such a man could fail. His whole bearing suggested a reserve power that would brook no defeat.

Two days later, beneath the pines and beside the wife he had loved so well, Lorimer was laid to rest. It was no ordinary funeral. Several of the mines closed in honour of the event, and a tremendous crowd gathered to witness the last scene of all.

The week that followed recorded two distinct sensations in Crossing life.

The first was the discovery that the Silver Cloud lead had been traced into the Golden Crown, where it had widened into a real mine. Eula Lorimer suddenly found herself a rich woman.

The second was the mysterious disappearance of Godfrey Emmett. One morning he was in his office as usual. The next day he was gone. Careful search revealed no clue. No one had seen him go. It was as if the earth had suddenly opened and swallowed him up.

Mrs. Maylor and Eula were much concerned. They knew not what to do. And after the others had given up they instituted search after search. But there was no result.

Finally they were obliged to admit defeat. To

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Eula the hill country, Pine Ridge and the Crossing, became unbearable. She wanted to go away. An opportunity soon presented itself. She received an invitation from her father's only surviving sister to come and pay her an extended visit. After a long consultation covering the somewhat involved details of her father's estate, she left the whole matter in the hands of Bruce Jimmy, and set out on the following day.

But just before leaving she was surprised to receive a note from Godfrey. It bore no postmark, and the manner of its delivery at Maylor's doorstep was not clear. In it Godfrey restated his problem, maintaining that until the victory satisfied him he could not hold her bound. He closed with a declaration that she was the only woman he would ever love.

And now let us follow him to his lone retreat.

Green Ridge mountain was inaccessible, except for an obscure trail, but there was a new cabin on its summit. To find peace and victory the Prodigal had climbed there, determined to master the thing that had hitherto mastered him. Someway, somehow, he must find new strength. The loss of the Boundary Star case had struck deep. It was no ordinary opportunity and the chance that it had afforded would not come soon again.

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In reality he was trying the Shepherd's remedy, but he was too proud to let the Shepherd know.

Solitude attracts the man who desires to overcome. It is said of an Algonquin Indian that when he is in deep trouble, when he wishes to renew his strength of purpose or cleanse his heart, he appeals to the Great Mystery. Alone he seeks the pinnacle of a mountain or some far secluded spot where none can see. There with the wilderness at his feet and the blue canopy of heaven above him he offers up his unspoken prayer.

It was this same instinct which had drawn Godfrey to the top of Green Ridge mountain. And thus we find him out in the wilderness—in the Great Solitude—that he might offer up his Prayer of Mystery.

He had his supplies brought out secretly, built a cabin, and set himself a regular routine of work. He began to chop and clear a small area amid the timber. Then, in addition, gathering dry firewood and cooking his meals took up a goodly portion of his time. With his gun he was fortunate enough to secure a buck deer. This gave him a supply of venison for the winter.

It was well towards Christmas when the surging of the craving rose, smote him, and left him with a first warning. Then came days when

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a deadlock ensued. He could not see that he had gained. He knew the enemy had not retreated.

Christmas Eve brought little cheer to the lone man on the mountain. He sat up late, reading Caine's "Deemster," much moved at this tale of sin and suffering. Toward midnight he put out the light and walked out into the night. Above him a million stars were shining. Afar away in the distance lay the great world, with her untold millions — everywhere there was rejoicing in the victory of Heaven over Earth. And he, quite alone and unaided, was bivouacked on this lone mountain-top, fighting the battle of his life.

The next morning he slept late. The sun was well up when he opened the door. It was a beautiful winter morning. The snow lay crisp as it sparkled in the sunshine. But as he looked out over the valley the memories of the night before still lingered. There was no smoke from the Copper Horn shaft-house. The great mill was silent.

This was but one more evidence that it was a time of rejoicing. Thousands were gathering — had gathered in cathedrals and churches. Sons and daughters long gone would be found around the old fireside. Everywhere there would be love and good cheer. He began to regret his

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self-imposed exile. Then his face stiffened. His jaw set again. He must not act that way. He had almost retreated a step or two. A minute later he entered the cabin, humming a tune he had learned in boyhood.

But when he sat down to his morning repast he could not help heaving a deep sigh. He had visions of a home and a fair face across the table. And it was always the same face.

After breakfast he sat down to further follow the career of Dan, the prodigal. And when he closed the book noon had slipped by. He had forgotten the mid-day meal in his interest in the tale. And even then, regardless of the fact that he had eaten nothing since breakfast, he sat in his rude cabin chair for a time, pondering over those other lives and his.

Dan had obtained his victory, and Mona had found her lover. Happiness had come to them both. But even as it came, Death came, too; crowning Dan's victory and snatching her happiness away. This was depressing. It made him rebellious. He rose up, put on his fur-lined khaki coat, went to the door, opened it, passed out, and began walking about on the mountain in the clear, frosty air. His brain was in a whirl. He was more determined than ever, but it was plain that the enemy was on the offensive.

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He returned to the cabin and put on his snow-shoes. When he went forth again there was a firm, set look about his features. It was clear that he was planning a long tramp.

From Green Ridge mountain he dropped into the valley on the farther side, crossed James Creek, and ascended the Big Copper range. Returning, he followed a lower trail and came back by way of the Sheep Ranch. He hesitated a moment, and then made his way to the cabin.

The door swung open ere he had knocked and his hand was held in a warm clasp. The Shepherd had seen him coming.

"Young man," said the Shepherd, "where have you been? I was down to the Crossing yesterday and they were talking about you. They wonder where you are."

"You must keep my secret—for a time—don't let them know just yet. But I've been living on the mountain—Green Ridge mountain."

The Shepherd's face lighted up.

"That explains it all," he replied. "You are different, but I didn't know why."

"I have been fighting," answered the young man quietly.

"Yes," returned the Shepherd, "but there is more than that. You have been winning. I can see it in your face. The struggle has left

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lines there—but they are the lines left by the little feet as they trudge up the hills of victory.”

“Don’t — you mustn’t !” exclaimed the young man. “I can’t stand it. Why, to-day—only—I’ve—I’ve been in—been in hell.”

“Something has happened ?” said the Shepherd.

“Yes, something has happened. I have been reading a book—just finished it before I started out on this ten-mile tramp. The man was tempted—tempted even as I. Fiery blood ran in his veins. But after years of struggle he won his fight—his fight over the other half of himself. And then she came—the woman he loved. But while she pressed her lips to his brow Death came, and he was not. The would-be bride was left sorrowing. Now, I’ve always believed that some day she—you know who I mean—and I would—would be reunited—but suppose that—oh, I don’t know. She wanted to marry me once—immediately—and I insisted on delay. But I had better have accepted then—even with all the risk—than run the chance of losing happiness altogether.” It was plain that he was not himself—he was very much worked up.

“Friend,” returned the Shepherd, “there is always tragedy where passion marks out a course

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that reason does not commend. She loved deeply, and thought not of the rest. You knew yourself and declined. I daresay she loves you all the more now for doing what you did. But don't despair. And let me tell you—Fate sometimes levies burdens that nothing this side of Heaven will remove."

The Shepherd's face had turned white. His lips trembled. Godfrey was shocked at the change in him.

"Why, how is that—what has happened?"

"For months I have been carrying such a burden myself—oh, such a burden!"

The Shepherd's head bowed. His shoulders were rounded as though bearing a great load. The young man did not speak and after a moment's pause the Shepherd went on.

"You remember me telling you about the incident which wrecked my life? Well, something came up which made me doubt, and I went back and visited the old scenes. Everybody that I knew had moved away, and it was not easy to get at the truth. However, an old magistrate told me the tale. It seems that my wife always felt that I would come back some day, and she left the proofs with him. The fact is my wife was true. The man who visited her on that night was her brother—her long-lost brother.

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And eight months after my departure I became the father of two children—twins—a boy and a girl.”

The Shepherd’s voice broke. He had difficulty in controlling himself so that he could continue.

“The brother supported her, but he died two years later. She lived one year longer. The children were placed in an Orphan’s Home and later on adopted by different families. But the girl always wore her mother’s locket and—and that brought the tragedy.”

“The tragedy—what?”

“Yes—the tragedy—you remember Maisie Gray?”

“Of course.”

In memory he recalled the troubled look of the girl behind the curtain.

“Well, she is my daughter. Now you know it all.”

“Why,” exclaimed the young man, “I never thought——”

“Sometimes the thought of it drives me wild,” the Shepherd went on. “It’s horrible—horrible—just think how horrible! My son—and my daughter—they—they meet in a—a—a—oh, I can’t—I can’t say it!”

Overcome, the Shepherd could no longer speak. His form shook like a leaf in the wind.

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A few minutes later he was able to continue.

“And the boy—my boy—the boy that I never saw, became the victim. Stern as I am, I know that he had only entered the one door where there was a welcome of light and love and laughter. He was just a lone boy in the hills—and lonely, like the rest. So now you can see that there are some burdens that nothing this side of Heaven will remove. Persevere, my friend. The damage is not irreparable. Life and victory can still be yours.”

Godfrey rose.

“I will go now,” he said, as he shook the Shepherd’s hand. “You are right. Mine is a little burden, after all.”

The load had been lifted. He walked back to the cabin on the mountain with a swinging, manly stride.

And his thoughts on that tramp were long, long thoughts.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE DAY BEFORE NEW YEAR'S

BUT if the load had been lifted for the time, the battle was no more than begun. There were still many peaks of decision and conflict to be scaled.

When Godfrey reached the cabin on the mountain he lighted a fire and began to prepare supper. He had learned to make a bannock of a sort, and finding that there was very little bread left, he set about the task. He was rather slow at the new job and it was some time before the oven door of the tin stove closed over the bread-pan.

He heaved a deep sigh. This was a part of the hermit stunt that he did not like.

He poked up the fire, turned about, and began to walk up and down, his hands folded behind his back. The influence of the Shepherd's words of encouragement was on the wane. It was all very well for him to urge a continuance

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of the course he had mapped out, but his heart was heavy. Solitude had its place, but it was not very satisfying when his blood ran warm and he longed for human company.

The bannock was less of a success than on previous occasions. It was sour and soggy. And as he ate his frugal supper his mood did not have any tendency to temper his rebellion. He went to bed early and slept little.

When he awoke the next morning the whole valley was shrouded in mist, but the mountain top was bathed in sunlight. It was a beautiful sight—the bright peaks with their tints of silver rising majestic out of the fog below.

“What a lesson for you, Godfrey Emmett!” he whispered. “Down in the Valley of the Mist, Habit makes man a slave. But up on the Mountain Top in the Sunlight, Will makes him a King. And don’t forget it ever—no matter what happens to you—there is always Sunlight at the Top—Sunlight at the Top.”

As he hustled about getting wood to make a fire, he whistled merrily. He drew deep, long breaths of the fresh mountain air. It brought a glow to his cheeks and gave him an appetite. His life might be lonely, but there were compensations. He faced the coming days with a smile and a song.

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His breakfast consisted of bacon and eggs, fried potatoes, cheese and crackers. He did not like to break in on his stock of the latter, as it was getting low, but the bread was out of the question, and there was no alternative. And the eggs?—well, they were not exactly “fresh ranch.” As he rose from his chair and cut off a nice roast of venison he reflected that in comparison dinner would be a feast.

Then he began his morning round, which consisted of a long walk on snowshoes and a couple of hours wood-chopping. He was very particular about this. He would rather lose a meal than miss the two hours’ wood-chopping that he obliged himself to do each day. It kept his blood cool and developed a perceptible increase in muscular power.

He had a few days of real pleasure, but at the longest, they were but short. Within a week he experienced the inward restlessness which told him that another spell was coming on, one of those periods when the craving, the devilish appetite, would drive him to the depths of despair.

The crisis came on the day before New Year’s. When he awoke on the bright December morning he knew that the time had come. Either defeat or victory would mark from that day.

He did not prepare breakfast, for he knew that

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he could not eat. Water he drank freely, but it did not quench his thirst. The craving was more intense than he had ever known it before. There would be no need for punishment in the hereafter. He was living in the torment now.

He opened the door and looked out. It was a beautiful winter day. The smoke curled up from a dozen shaft-houses, an emblem of the activity of the camp. A longing to be in the world of men once more welled up within him. His course might be heroic but it was not life. To-morrow the boys would be in from the camps. Down in the Crossing a jubilant crowd would be in possession. Why should he not go as well as they? He recalled many a jolly New Year's Day at the Good Fellows' Inn.

A minute passed. He had about decided to go. Two minutes, and he was ready. Three minutes, and he had started down the trail. Five minutes, and he was walking briskly toward the Crossing. And there had come to him the treacherous peace—the deep, calm, mysterious peace that only the defeated know.

But his thought cleared presently, and he saw what it would really mean. The voice within whispered and he turned back.

He was a long time in reaching the cabin. The fire was burning. He threw himself in the

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snow, wallowing about in its delightful coolness, trying to still the tumult.

He arose, stretched himself, and walked slowly—very slowly back. When he reached the door of the cabin he lingered there a moment, as he cast his eyes over the landscape. It was a beautiful world—oh, such a beautiful world, with the sun shining brightly, the trees snow-crested, and the icicles glistening as they dripped in the sunlight.

Once back in the cabin the reaction set in. He locked the door securely and threw the key out through a crack in the logs. It might be that he would need to be saved from himself.

He tried to read, but it was no use. He walked the floor, restlessly, and grew tired of that. When it was nearly noon he discovered that he was hungry and set about getting something to eat.

He prepared a good meal and ate heartily. The venison steak was particularly tender and juicy. For the moment he forgot his problem. This was life.

The noon hour sped by and the lonely moments came again. Hours passed as he walked up and down. For a change he sometimes stood at the window, looking out into the valley below. Once he thought of jerking out the window, of beating down the door and making his escape.

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Then he looked at a picture on the wall and shook his head. She expected him to make good. The battle was begun. The engagement must be finished. And it would not be freedom, as the tempting voices told him. It would be once more welding the chains of the old slavery. And so all day he fought and fought and fought—and won.

But the day made a heavy drain on his vitality. When night came he was very tired and he went to bed early. He would not be able to stand many days like this. He drifted off into slumberland almost at once.

And that night he had a wonderful dream. In the vision he was swimming alone in a great ocean, weary, desperate, all but exhausted and ready to sink. The struggle seemed hopeless. He was about to give up. When suddenly—just as he was about to sink—a white figure with outstretched hand shot out of the sky, and he noticed that as long as he kept his eyes on the figure he swam easily—on and on. But the moment he looked away he began to sink. And as soon as he discovered this he never turned away for an instant—kept watching the outstretched hand constantly—and swam on, on, on—swam as easily as men float until he reached the shoreline in the distance beyond.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE COWARD'S WAY TO PEACE

THE old year passed away. January came and went. February bowed itself in and out. March appeared, heralding the spring. And still Godfrey Emmett lived in the cabin on Green Ridge mountain. He was not yet ready to renew the battle in the world beyond the ridges.

Toward the middle of March there were signs that the winter was breaking up. In the narrow valley below the mountain the snow was disappearing. In the lower valleys it had altogether disappeared. The spirits of the young man rose. The pulse of spring entered into his blood.

Then reaction came. Late one March day the skies lowered, clouds gathered, and snow began to fall. The following morning it was deeper on the mountain than it had been at any time during the winter.

Toward noon the wind rose, and by the middle of the afternoon it had fanned itself into

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a hurricane. The lone man in the lone cabin was very much depressed. What was the use of continued battle, when cross-currents took the ground from beneath your feet ?

He pondered much. The mystery of it all baffled him. The spirit of the storm entered in, possessed him. He looked out. On the bald face of the mountain the Kings of the Forest were bending their backs beneath nature's lash. A flurry of fresh snow blurred the outlines of the valley. Then there was a loud crack. A giant tree near the cabin bent, slivered and broke. A minute later it lay flat on the ground, a wreck of what it had been in life and beauty.

But its life was over. It was at peace. The thought was fascinating, alluring. All over the mountain the other Kings of the Forest still fought with the elements. Back and forth they swayed as the wind souged and sighed. But for this old giant the battle and conflict was over. It was at peace—peace—yes, that was the word.

He made effort after effort, but he found it impossible to drive away the thought which held him with such a peculiar fascination. It lulled him into repose. The prospect appeared so delightful. It would take but a minute. There would be no more struggling forward—no more slipping back. No more rising and

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falling. No more frenzied effort — no more striving madly to press on. — And there would follow peace. Each time he came back to that.

He went to the window and looked out. There were the mountains—the wonderful mountains that he had learned to love. Some time there would come one long, last look. It was cruel to think that she would never know how he had struggled and fought. But it might have to be. He was burning up and he had no strength left.

He glanced out of the window again, but this time his gaze was not turned towards the mountains—the wonderful mountains that he had learned to love. He saw nothing but the giant tree, lying calm and quiet and peaceful on the snow-covered surface of Mother Earth.

Turning about, he walked up and down the room. He noticed a picture on the wall—her picture. He looked at it closely. He had never thought her gaze so penetrating. She seemed to be looking into his very soul.

He sat down on a chair by the fire.

The wind blew the door open. He paid no attention—did not notice.

The room grew chilly. He poked up the fire.

He began to feel hungry, rose, shut the door, and started to prepare supper.

* * * * *

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Supper was over. Night had come and with it—darkness. The wind blew no longer. The storm was over for the time. There was a candle in the window, the light shining out on the snow.

He sat by the fire smoking—his head propped against his hand.

The wild thoughts of that fascinating peace had come back, he longed for the deep and mysterious calm that only the defeated know. Again and again he drove them away, but as often they came flitting back.

He rose up, walked over to the corner, and began fumbling in his grip-sack for the thing that he hoped he would not find. It had gone pretty far. He could not trust himself. The struggle had been too much. He was far spent.

And then there followed one of those simple incidents which sometimes have such a far-reaching effect on life and destiny.

There was a sound, a strange sound—dim, feeble, plaintive. It was like a lamb bleating. But that could not be. It was impossible. He dismissed the thought. But it came again. There could be no doubt. He went to the door, opened it, and listened.

It floated up the mountain-side distinctly. Yes, it was true. It was the plaintive wail of the strayaway.

Evidently the Shepherd had turned his flock

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out to graze and browse during the thaw, and in the sudden storm a yearling had strayed away. Godfrey listened intently. The sound seemed to be fairly near—and then nearer and nearer.

A moment later there was a weird howl which made his blood run cold. There were timber wolves about, far away, it was true—but it was likely they were on the trail of the lamb. He stirred himself, shifted his chair and placed a new candle in the window.

He picked up a book, tried to read, but could not. His thought was with that stray lamb out on the mountain, pursued and trapped by the wolves. After what seemed a very long time he heard the sound again—that bleating of the stray lamb.

He went to the door and opened it. The light was dim. He could not see anything with any degree of distinctness. But a short distance down the trail it was apparent that there was a movement—something was pushing its way along in the darkness. Branches of the trees swished upward and in rising dropped their weight of snow. Then it came nearer—closer to the cabin. He could see it clearly. It was a stray lamb. Slowly, very slowly, it came nearer and nearer. The howling of the wolves was now very clear and distinct. The pack was getting close.

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And still the lamb came on, attracted by the light in the window. Perhaps it realized that there could be no safety, except in the cabin. Godfrey would have rushed out to hurry it, but wild thing that it was, he was afraid that he might frighten it away. At last it was but a few feet away. He waited, expectantly. The pack were now very close. In a moment it had rushed in, and coming up to where he stood, rubbed its nose against his palm, confidingly.

The effect was electric. Godfrey experienced the sensation of a lone man who has suddenly found a friend. The tables were turned. He had ceased to be a fugitive and had become the keeper of a haven.

And it was not a moment too soon. The wolf pack were already sniffing around the door. He opened the door slightly, fired one shot, and then sat down by the fire, oblivious to the rabble outside, as they turned to rend the victim.

The lamb came up by his side, and he put out his hand and stroked it. Even the animal companionship soothed him. Something had melted the ice of his indifference to life.

He was greatly moved. Almost unconsciously, he breathed a simple prayer of thankfulness. With a new zest he once more laid hold on life.

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A new desire to love and be loved sprang up within him. The load was lifted. The burden had rolled away.

Before he retired to rest he passed out into the night and gazed up at the sky, all strewn with dark and threatening clouds. The elements were gathering their forces for another storm. He glanced again at the giant tree at rest and shook his head.

"No, that is not the strong man's way," he whispered. "And how it lures the footsore and the weary—the discouraged pilgrims who have grown tired of the battle and of life. Man's eager imagination makes a gilded path at the end of the thorny way. It should be labelled, 'The Coward's Way to Peace.'"

He fingered in his hip pocket, drew out what he found there, and deliberately threw it away.

* * * * *

Toward midnight the storm broke out afresh. Like a hurricane the wind raced across the mountain, bringing ruin and destruction as it came. Another great tree found the strain too great and joined its partner of the day before. In its descent it dropped across the cabin, crushing in the roof, shattering one whole side, and making the sleeper a prisoner.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

GODFREY was scarcely asleep when he awoke in agony. Upon investigation, he discovered that the great tree had fallen across his leg, breaking it below the knee. It was bound fast beneath the timber. He could not move.

He called—called loudly, and then with a groan he realized that it was useless. The horror of the situation began to grip him. He was miles and miles away from civilization. He would have to die this way.

What a strange thing life was ? He had won but to fail. He had overcome only to be cast down. Fate had spun its web and he had been caught in the meshes. He remembered his rebellious thoughts of the previous afternoon. Well, he would find peace after all !

Crouched in a corner near the bed, the lamb had escaped injury. It rose up and came over

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to where he lay. He rewarded it with a friendly pat. In his loneliness and pain it was a consolation to have the animal near. And then a ray of hope shot through. The Shepherd always kept a very careful count. He might miss this one and come to search.

He tried to sleep, but the pain was unendurable. In addition he was being chilled through. A great hole in the roof left the sky above visible and the drifting snow sifted in. He knew that he would not be able to stand very many hours of this.

And as he sought for the sleep that would not come he began to wonder about the hour. What time was it? How long would he have to wait until the daylight would appear? His watch was in his coat, which hung from a peg near the bed, but he could not reach it. Oh, if he could only get his leg free?

He made herculean efforts, which only piled up fresh agony. It was horrible to be so helpless. If he could only die in peace—remain sane to the end. He knew that delirium could not be very far off.

He thought of Eula—of his love and of his hopes. Of his profession and of his dreams. If only he could let her know that the enemy had not won! He began to pray—prayed that

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the hour of delirium might be postponed and that the dawn might find him conscious and in his right mind. He wanted to pen or scribble a message. She might never see it, but he could only hope that chance might bring some straggler to the cabin before the words had faded away.

* * * * *

The Shepherd awoke with a start. He had heard a cry—a cry as of a lamb's bleat mingled with a human voice. He sat up in bed and listened. There was no sound. He must have been mistaken. He lay back on the pillow. He went to sleep.

But again he awoke with a start. Certainly he had heard it this time—that same piercing bleat—and a man's cry in agony. He got up at once, dressed, went to the door, opened it and stood listening.

He could hear nothing.

The night before he had counted the flock very hurriedly before rushing them into the shed. At the time the wind was blowing a gale, and the blinding snow made accuracy impossible.

He walked out to the shed, lighted his lantern and began to count. The thing was puzzling,

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The one hundred and fifty-seven were all there. However, it was very hard to count. In confusion a group had huddled themselves together. He began to count again. This time he made out that there was one short.

He counted them four times before he was satisfied. Yes, there was one missing. It took him but a moment to make up his mind. He went to the stable and saddled his swiftest and most sure-footed pony, fed it a good ration of grain, and returned to the cabin, where he prepared his breakfast in great haste. It was about five o'clock.

Half an hour later, mounted on his pony, he set out for the hills. He headed towards Green Ridge mountain, upon the lower reaches of which he had found the band the day before.

Pine Ridge was high enough up in the mountains, but when he began to ascend he found that Green Ridge was in the cloud realm. There had been a stiff wind blowing in the valley, but it was sweeping across the bare spots on the mountain with the speed of a tornado. And as the Shepherd urged his pony ever onward in the face of the wind it was forced to his attention that it was a dangerous day to be about. Trees were falling everywhere.

As he looked away over the mountains, wild

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and bare and beautiful, he thought of Godfrey Emmett. A flood of compassionate feeling swept over him. Why, this determined young fellow was only a boy, after all. And since that night in the cabin he had allowed him to remain on the mountain alone. Just now he wished that he had not—that he had paid a visit or two—just to assure himself that all was well. The test was rather severe. And if—if anything happened he would never forgive himself. In the light of his forebodings the cry in the night took on a new meaning. He urged the pony, but found that it was useless. The beast was doing the best it could. He kept watching for tracks, but this was useless, too.

* * * * *

The lone man on the mountain tucked the blankets close about him. The wind whistled mournfully about the eaves and the snow continued to drift in through the opening in the roof. Now and then a wolf howl echoed through the darkness. It filled him with fear to find his body getting colder. He rubbed his chest with his hands and beat his arms about to keep himself warm. Oh, if daylight would only come!

All things have an end and at last the dawn

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came. But instead of hope, it brought him something akin to despair.

The tree was a giant, and his leg was fast bound beneath it. With his freed hands he used a short stick and attempted to raise the log enough to permit him to withdraw his leg. But the effort was all in vain. He was a prisoner, indeed.

* * * * *

When the Shepherd came to the crest of the mountain the storm had reached its height. The trail took a turn to the westward through a bleak, open space, and as the pony made the turn the storm almost carried him off his feet. A sudden, storm-girt burst of wind, beating upon it, made immediate progress quite as impossible as a wall of rock would have done. The Shepherd turned the pony around with its back facing the wind until the sudden gust had spent its force. A few minutes later the weary horse and rider turned up the trail once more.

In the beginning the missing yearling had been the only object of the Shepherd's quest. But reflection and the trend of his sympathy had modified this. He could not forget the voice in the night. He was determined to go to the cabin on the mountain first.

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A mile further on the trail ran through a group of giant firs. And as the Shepherd saw the way they were being driven back and forth with the fury of the storm he wished that the need were less urgent. To pass through this cluster of firs was decidedly dangerous. Then a great tree fell just ahead of him, and that increased his fear. But he dare not hold back now. He must push on. Every instinct urged haste. A thousand voices were roaring that call of the night in his ears.

He had not gone more than half-way through the group of firs when he heard a loud crack. Glancing around, he saw that a standing dead tree had snapped off ten feet from the ground, and was lingering a moment—a final totter before its fall. But he also saw that it was likely to fall across the trail at almost the very spot where the pony stood.

He shouted as he shuffled out of the saddle. Tired, weary and not understanding, the poor brute stopped short once he had jumped clear. The tree came crashing down. The Shepherd closed his eyes that he might not see.

Mingled with the thud of the falling tree he heard a cry—a shriek that in its appeal was so human that it brought the tears to his eyes.

A moment's investigation proved that the

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hind legs and the rump were crushed beneath the trunk. The poor brute's back was broken.

This was a hard blow. It had been his favourite pony for more than seven years. But he must put it out of its misery as soon as possible. His knife was none too sharp and the work was not pleasant. When he turned up the trail to complete the rest of his journey he sighed wearily and long.

* * * * *

Godfrey had given up hope. Delirium was coming. Unconsciousness was coming. And after that—well, after that—the—the—end.

He reached for a pencil and scrap of paper. He began to write.

And now that he was writing it, the message was hard to frame. He had only the one little sheet of paper and the message must be brief. At the same time it must tell all. Otherwise it would be better left unwritten. And while he tried to think what to leave out and what to put in he began to whisper a prayer of the long ago.

“Our—our Father—who—who art in Heaven—Hallowed—be—be thy—name. Thy—thy—will be done on Earth as it is done in Heaven. Thy—thy—thy—kingdom—come——”

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But he got no further. Everything was getting hazy. It was coming so—so—soon. He drifted off into unconsciousness.

* * * * *

When the Shepherd reached the cabin he took in the situation at a glance. He tore open the clothing and found there was still hope. He pulled the cork from a flask and forced some of the liquid between the unwilling lips.

“It should not be this, but it must,” he muttered to himself. “I have nothing else.”

After a half-hour’s work the signs were sufficiently encouraging to permit an interlude. He built a fire.

There was a movement on the bed. The Prodigal began to talk in a whisper. He was delirious—he did not recognize the Shepherd. The burden of his talk, his wild talk, was an inquiry. Who was his visitor?

The Shepherd glanced over toward the wall and he saw there a cheap print of the Shepherd of the Ages. No doubt some prospector with dreamy tendencies had placed it there. There was an inscription below and he whispered it softly :

“‘I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the Sheep.’”

CHAPTER XXX

THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

THE Shepherd's first task was to raise the fallen tree so that the broken leg could be released. He cut a stout fir of good length, trimmed it of branches, and placed the end under the log. By prying over a block of wood, and exerting all his strength, he was able to raise it slightly. As he raised he inserted supports, and was finally able to get his friend released from his horrible position.

Then he set to work. He bound the broken limb to a rough board, rearranged the bed, piled on more blankets, and in every way possible tried to make the sufferer comfortable.

Godfrey talked wildly. There was one name frequently upon his lips.

The Shepherd next turned his attention to the hole in the roof. The snow was still drifting in. He chopped a new plate log and lifted it into place. It spanned from corner to corner

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on the broken side. Then he covered the roof and side openings with brush and evergreens. When he had finished it was a snug little house.

The storm continued. The wind still blew like a hurricane, tossing the snow about in great eddies and piling it up in drifts. The Shepherd looked out from time to time—uneasily.

It was a difficult situation. For no matter what the storm he would have to bring a doctor. He waited until noon in the hope that the gale would abate, but instead of this the wind rose higher and higher.

At noon he gave Godfrey a good dinner of hot soup and a little venison. He seemed to be a little easier. The delirium was gone. He did not talk so wildly. The leg was swelling in a dangerous fashion and the pain was very great.

Immediately after dinner the Shepherd made preparations to set out. He explained that he hoped to be back before dark. He would saddle a fresh pony at the ranch and ride over to the Silver Cloud, where there was a connection with the Crossing by telephone. As he left, he felt apprehensive. He did not like to leave him. He warned him to exert himself to keep under control, and then rushed from the room.

It was almost one o'clock when he fastened the snowshoes and began the long descent down

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the mountain. In spite of the wind and the drifting snow he made fair progress and arrived at the ranch shortly before four. He fed the ponies, saddled one of them, and was talking to a Crossing doctor at twenty minutes to five. The latter promised to come at once. But it was already getting dark.

He rode back to the ranch, loaded two pack-horses with supplies, and waited for the doctor. He knew that if he went on alone the physician would never find the way. The doctor arrived in half an hour and they set out without any delay.

Had it not been that the storm had subsided somewhat they would not have reached the cabin on the mountain that night. The drifting snow had almost completely obliterated the trail, and more than once they lost their way. When they arrived finally it was almost midnight.

Godfrey had borne up bravely, but the leg was swollen to such a degree that his task was difficult. The pain was almost beyond endurance. The Shepherd assisted as much as he could while the limb was being set, but it was early morning before the job was done.

The doctor remained until noon. In spite of the distance he agreed to make daily trips. The patient would have to be moved as soon as possible.

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Despite the delay in the setting, there were no complications, and on a bright day a few weeks later Godfrey was laid out on a stretcher, the latter was bound to a bob-sled constructed for this special purpose, and with Bruce Jimmy in front and the Shepherd behind, the little procession started down the mountain. There was no snow in the valley, and at the foot of the mountain they discarded the bob-sled and loaded the stretcher on the buck-board for the rest of the trip.

There was a dispute as to where the patient was to be taken. The doctor affirmed that he should go to the Crossing hospital. The Shepherd insisted that he should be brought to his cabin. The doctor did not feel like giving way, but the Shepherd pleaded so hard, and he had proved to be such a faithful nurse, that he finally gave his consent. At the same time he averred that he would probably have to send a trained nurse. But as we shall see presently, the question of a nurse was taken out of their hands altogether. It settled itself.

Just at dusk on the following evening a young woman presented herself at the Lorimer cottage at Pine Ridge. Finding no one there she appeared to be very much puzzled. She was very tired and the tears were not far away.

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What could have happened? She had never heard that they had gone away.

She returned to the road, climbed the hill beyond, and made her way down to the Sheep Ranch, arriving there a few minutes after dark.

It was none other than Maisie Gray.

She rapped lightly. The Shepherd came to the door, but in the darkness he did not recognize her until she had entered. He fell back in astonishment. Many an hour he had spent dreaming that such a thing might happen. And now it had happened. He gave a cry of joy.

"You—you!" he exclaimed.

She came nearer. She did not understand this strange demonstration.

"Yes," she whispered.

He came toward her as though he were going to fold her in his arms. She wondered what it meant. Could it be that the mystery had been cleared up and that—and that——? She waved him back and asked a question. She wanted to know if there had been trouble at Pine Ridge—why it was that there was nobody there? She was very tired and had come back for a little holiday.

"Eula is away," he answered briefly. "There was an accident and her father was killed."

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He gave no more details. There would be time for that later. Just now there was another story he wanted to tell.

She saw that he was labouring under some strange excitement, and she did not press him. She recalled his emotion on the day he had gone away.

He came to her, placed his hands upon her shoulders, looked into her eyes.

She was a little surprised that he should do this. Surely he must know that she was strong enough to bear up under the details of the story of the thing that had killed Lorimer and had driven Eula away. She was no longer a weak girl. But there was a mysterious light in his eyes. Once more she wished that in the lot of life she could have had a father, and that he could have been given to her as the one to fill that place.

"My dear," he whispered. He got no further for a moment. He began to finger the locket she still wore at her neck. And she saw that she had been mistaken. What he wished to tell her was not about Eula and her father. Would that it were about herself!

She encouraged him. He feared to begin lest the message would leave her cold, and him a despised outcast for ever. In that hour, as

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never before, he saw the degree, the immensity of the crime he had committed in his haste on that night in the long ago. At last he found strength and courage to go on.

"When we last met," he told her, "I was in the midst of a contemplation of a certain possibility. But the whole thing was honey-combed with doubt. I went away, found, heard and saw; and the doubt has been removed. And I don't know how to tell it—can't just bring myself to do it. The pith of the story is this. That locket you wear was a gift of mine to your mother. You are my daughter. I am your father. The rest I cannot tell you now."

She gave a glad cry, leaned toward him, and he folded her in his arms.

This demonstration on her part changed everything for him in a moment. It was a sign that nature had spoken. Perhaps he could unbosom himself after all.

He began, and even as he had started, he saw that she was trying to make it easy for him—this story that he had to tell.

It was a long story, but he did not spare himself in the telling. She was weeping softly when he had finished. But he was through with merely the tale itself.

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There was a long pause.

Then with a break in his voice he told of the hours that he had spent, weeping his heart out, at the grave of her whom he had deserted and wronged.

“Oh, if I could just have the past back—just have it back,” he muttered over and over.

“But that is impossible,” she told him. “All we can do is improve the future—consecrate it to service. Let me tell you the story of a nurse in the hospital. She was very faithful and everybody loved her. She had worked hard over her cases—was very tired—and some way—somehow—she made a mistake—she mixed the medicines. He was only a young boy—and he died. She went nearly crazy—says she will not nurse any more. But she couldn’t bring him back.”

Very gradually her attitude began to have a definite effect. It became apparent that she did not hold him guilty in intent. It was all a mistake—a terrible mistake.

“Daddy,” she whispered, after an hour had passed. “I was wondering—you see—the work is hard at times, and—well, do you suppose that I could stay home a little while?”

“Can you?”

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He laughed at the very idea of a refusal. "Why," he went on, "I fancy that you can do anything you like. Indeed, I expect that you will become boss of the ranch and order me about. My dear girl, if you were to talk of going away now I would put a barricade around you and lock you up."

That settled it, as it might be expected that it would. But, if he had known it, there was a deeper reason for her coming home. The camp hospital was not so very far away from the Crossing, and the world has a long memory.

The Shepherd thought of his patient. He had all but forgotten him. He led her into the room. Godfrey was asleep. In a few words he told her the story.

"Daddy, can I nurse him?" she queried. "Please say that I can. Because, you see—he saved me once—and I'll never forget it—never. And between them—he and Eula—they gave me a new lease on life. Please say that I may nurse him—Daddy—Daddy, dear."

For answer he bowed his head and smiled. She set to work.

Just before they retired to rest that night, she threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. He pressed her close to his heart.

"Oh, it's wonderful," she told him, "and

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after all these long, weary, lonely years—a real Daddy at last.”

“My dear,” he responded, “we are going to be happy while we may. The past is past. It’s gone. We can’t change it or bring back the lost opportunity. But we are going to make the very most of the days that lie before us. Ah, yes, there’s many a happy day ahead of us in these grand old hills, and we are going to enjoy them to the full.”

The new nurse gave Godfrey quite a surprise. He was delighted. And it is only the truth to say that not many patients have ever received such attention. If the pain was hard to bear, she read aloud, luring him into a dim, shady land of forgetfulness. If he expressed a desire for some little dainty in the way of food, she lost no time in preparing it. If his head ached, she laid hold of the camphor bottle and bathed the fevered brow. If he seemed depressed, she drew him into conversation, driving the dark clouds away.

The Shepherd spent much time with him. At first they talked but little. The Shepherd had come to see that there was a divine germ at work, and he was content to be patient.

But chance remarks, occasional questions, quiet observations and the general attitude of

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the patient were sufficient to indicate the channel in which his mind was working. Inside its shell the unborn soul seemed to be breaking through the crust. The steps were being taken warily, as though the pilgrim was finding his way; but withal, the feet were being planted firmly—standing fast as he waited for the overhanging mist to clear away from the clouded understanding. Sometimes the mist hung for days, but between times the sun peeped out, lighting up the dark paths and the cavernous darkness with its marvellous light.

Man was not born to failure; he was destined for success. But there were rules about the passage, and the voyager had to know his chart. To mistake it was to run on the rocks, or into the shoals where the mariner found himself stranded. But with a knowledge of the chart—ah, that was the true way!—the sails adjusted to the breeze and the ship rushing for the harbour. And it seemed to Godfrey that hitherto he had had no chart, or else that he had been sailing in an uncharted sea.

One day, when Maisie had arranged the pillows so that he could sit up in bed, he was moved to confession. The Shepherd became hopeful. Perhaps the time had come to pick the fruit.

“When I was a mere boy,” Godfrey began,

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“I became the protégé of Stephen Madigan. What could be more natural than that I should imbibe something of his cold philosophy? And when I became old enough I went with him to the lectures at the Free Thinkers’ Club. They were cold things, but marvellously clever, and their cleverness caught me. And later, when I discovered what I did discover—the uncovered appetite—I had nothing to feed on but the cold brilliance of that intellect. I cried out for bread and I received—husks. Nothing was positive. They did not know—they could not tell, but—always it was but—but—everything was in doubt.

“It was only after I came out here that I began to discover something positive. The first shock came when you proclaimed the malady—when you declared that you knew it, even though we had not spoken before. And since then I have watched you. It was plain that you had found the thing that, all unconsciously, I was seeking. And then there came the collapse—and this last winter! Mere will-power was no longer enough. And even though I had won, I had failed. Had you not come—answered that call through the darkness—I would have passed out and none would have known. What roused you from your slumber

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to plunge into the darkness? How—why did that far cry permeate into the ear drum? I cannot answer. I dare not. It would be asserting too much. But it has all brought me a belief—a firm belief in the Infinite; and that behind it all—man and nature—there is one Supreme Pilot in control. In reserve for the use of all there is tremendous surplus power. But we must connect the wire and keep the battery charged.”

Maisie came to the door and warned them. Her patient must not exert himself too much. The Shepherd rose and left the room. The Prodigal turned over on his pillow and slept like a child.

After the first month his recovery was rapid. And when the buds were bursting and the hill-sides and the valleys were turning green he was able to walk about on crutches. Maisie always accompanied him. She was afraid that he might get careless and have a nasty fall which might possibly be accompanied with disastrous results. He often called her a delightful tyrant, but she did not care. She wanted to see him as he once had been. Later on, when the leg became stronger, she left him very much to himself.

It was then that she began to devote special attention to the father that she had just found.

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Day after day they spent delightful hours together, rambling over mountain and vale, glorying in nature, her beauty and her wonders, care-free and happy as children, except when memory returned to smite them and strike them dumb.

On a bright May afternoon Emmett was sitting on the front porch. Maisie was reading to him and the Shepherd was in the garden. A stranger came riding up.

It was Manson. Godfrey's greetings were not effusive. His recollection of their last interview was rather too keen. But without any delay or preliminaries Manson made his mission clear.

It appeared that in Corson's hands the Boundary Star case was not going well, and he wanted to give it back to him. If he preferred Corson could be retained as associate counsel. Godfrey was not easily convinced, although his heart gave a bound at the first word. This was a chance to beat back, and beat back big.

"The truth is, Emmett," said Manson finally, "the case is too much for the old man. He doesn't understand—he lacks the daring, the essential grasp, the penetration. It's either you or one of the big fellows in the east, and they don't understand local conditions like you. It's your opportunity. Will you take it?"

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Godfrey hesitated. He was still smarting from last year's wounds."

"Just say you will," urged Manson. "Forget the past. It is all over now."

He gave his word, and Manson rode away content.

After he was gone Godfrey went for a long walk in the hills, going as far as his strength would permit. Those last words echoed through his brain. He was glad the retreat was over.

On the last day before his return to the Crossing Maisie arranged a little excursion to Green Ridge mountain. They rode slowly and arrived at the cabin, where Godfrey had spent the winter, shortly before noon. Here they made a fire and ate their lunch. In the early afternoon Maisie went off by herself, searching for some rare specimens of a new wild flower that she had discovered. The Shepherd and the one-time Prodigal were left alone together.

Godfréy was in a thoughtful mood. In the days that had passed since he had been on the mountain the snow and ice had disappeared, and the spring, with its message of new life and bursting buds, had come. During the winter all nature had been cold and frozen—dormant. It was not death—merely slumber. And now the grass, even on the pinnacles, was quite green.

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The forest was radiant with colour. Every tree and leaf and bud and flower paid a silent tribute to the great Force behind it all.

What was it? Could he tell? Was it such that a man could put out his hand and grasp it? He was not sure, but it seemed to him that it was even more simple than that. With faith he had asked, and to him had been given. That was all. And he recognized that his experience had perfected the psychology of the great change. He was no longer the man who cannot. He had become the man who can.

He rose to his feet, busied himself for a few minutes, and when he had finished a cairn stood beside the cabin.

"Why?" inquired the Shepherd.

"It is a memorial," he answered. "The cabin may rot and decay, but the rocks will remain."

Maisie came back from her tramp, loaded down with flowers, her breast and arms a riot of colour. A few feet below them, and out of hearing, she sat down on a pine log. Her eyes wandered over the outline of valley and mountain and sky. Perhaps the scene meant to her what it meant to them.

Godfrey's thoughts raced on, gathered breadth and scope. He thought of that nature world as he had seen it in the depths of winter, and of the

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transformation that had taken place. He thought of Maisie as he had seen her first, of what she had passed through, and as he saw her now—calm, strong, resolute. He thought of the Shepherd, the wrecked life through a mistake, and the dominant spirit that had never released its hold on hope. He thought of himself. But of these thoughts we shall not tell.

He was silent for a period. But after a little he began to talk about the things that had been occupying his thought. Slowly and quietly he conversed with the Shepherd. And yet again he paused. Silence came. He broke it with a final observation.

“Yes, wonderful!” returned the Shepherd. “I have a name for it, and it does not seem to me that it has ever been improved on. I call it the Resurrection and the Life. Man dies but to live again. The flower fades to give birth to the next season’s new blossom. Every year the nature world renews itself. And so with man. He fails continually and yet continually he conquers. He retreats only to fall back on a new base from which he can begin a new assault.”

CHAPTER XXXI

MAISIE GRAY'S FAREWELL

FROM the first Godfrey was much occupied with the Manson case. He prepared his brief with particular care, but in the lower court the Amalgamated came off victorious. This was very disappointing, as Manson had promised an unusually large fee in the event of success. However, in the appeal he was more fortunate. The higher court set aside the finding of the trial judge. In turn the Amalgamated appealed from the decision of the full court, and the case was set down for final hearing before the Law Lords of Britain.

As he had planned at the time he severed his connection with Maylor, Godfrey began to make a speciality of handling damage suits for the miners. At that time the Workmen's Compensation laws were in a very imperfect state, but he did his best to secure justice for the maimed and crippled—relief for the orphan and the widow.

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The result was immediate. He was deluged with this class of business. The labour fraternity began to recognize that they had found a friend.

Maisie spent the summer with the Shepherd. It was a wonderful summer. There were calls from the division doctors at both Camp Two and Three, but she replied to them with a diplomatic negative. The truth was that she had got as near heaven as any mortal ever gets in this world, and she felt that she could not leave such a haven—at least, not for a time.

In fact, she wondered if she could ever leave it. She had never thought that life could be so beautiful. Their needs were simple and the products of the ranch met most of them. She had her own pony, and she could ride over the mountain at will. Her mind was free. There were no weary hours given over to a contemplation of whether or not she would be able to hold her place if tongues began to wag and busybodies began to spread the story that she could never tell. And so it was that she began to look upon the ranch as a spot where she might happily spend the rest of her days.

In the early autumn a serious epidemic of fever broke out at Roslyn, one hundred miles to the east. The altitude was high, the sanitary arrangements were bad, and the water supply

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had become polluted. Within a few weeks a fifth of the population were stricken. There was a continuous call for nurses.

For weeks Maisie resisted. But the call became more and more insistent. And still she hesitated. And then there came a letter which left no option. Men were dying through lack of proper attention. Every day the situation was becoming worse. She saw that it was a clear case of duty and that she must go.

She broke the news to the Shepherd. He was taken back. A few minutes later he retired to rest. But it was not to sleep. Hour after hour he lay awake, fighting out his battle. And when the morning came he met her with a smile. There was no trace of what he had passed through in that hard-won fight.

She went the next day, but the task was greater than she had expected. There were too few nurses and the hours were long. She did her best, but her strength was not very great. Toward the latter part of the third month of the battle with disease and death she found herself a victim to the dread malady.

But she refused to admit that her illness was serious, and wrote the Shepherd letter after letter in which she made no reference to it. And then the Shepherd received a letter which she did not send.

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And this introduces the young Sky-pilot. Slim, wiry and defiant, he had been at her side during all the long days of the fight with the disease. And when she had become so ill that she could no longer write, it was the young Pilot who penned the message she did not send.

The Shepherd came at once. The young Pilot met him at the station.

"She has taken a bad turn," he explained, as they walked over to the hospital. "But your coming may make a change. She talks of you constantly."

The Shepherd was ushered into the ward where she lay, and was much shocked to note the change in her appearance. The colour was gone from her cheeks and her hands were thin and bloodless.

She smiled as he entered, then tried to rise a little, and failed. She was very weak.

"I guess it has come, Daddy," she whispered. "And just when we had found each other—and were so happy."

"Don't—you must not," he told her, discerning her mental attitude by her words. "When the mind admits defeat it is a little matter for the body to agree. But when the mind denies what seems to be actual, the body can be whipped into submission. Your mental attitude must be one of denial."

MAISIE GRAY'S FAREWELL

"I know—I know, Daddy; but I have no strength left."

It was no more than the truth. Every hour she was getting weaker. The Shepherd was not allowed to remain in the ward for more than a few minutes. The nurse led him away, despite his pleadings.

The young Pilot was waiting for him, and they went for a long walk. They took the high road by way of the Blue Star and the Big Eagle, and then climbed the hill to the Man Roi. On the pinnacle above the mine they sat down and talked. The young man spoke freely of Maisie—of her work, of herself, and of how the miners loved her. And gradually the Shepherd came into possession of the secret that the young man could not hide.

And the secret made a bond between them. When they came back to town a little later, the Shepherd set out for an hotel, but the Pilot insisted that he should come and share his humble quarters in the shack behind the church.

The Shepherd was permitted to see Maisie for a few minutes every day, and on the fourth day following he noticed, as soon as he came in, that she appeared to be labouring under the stimulation of some new and wonderful excitement.

"Daddy," she whispered, "I have had a

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wonderful dream—oh, such a vision. There was a great white way and two paths leading—and I didn't know which way to go. For a moment I stood there—puzzled, wondering, bewildered. Suddenly a figure appeared at my side—took my arm—and led me along. Then we came to a dark and turbulent river, where there was no ferry and no bridge; but my guide found a way—I can hardly remember if there was a boat—we just seemed to float on the waves. At the other side we came to the gates of a city—a wonderful city of white and cream and gold. The keeper of the gate did not wish to let me in, but a word from my guide and I was ushered past him. Once inside, my friend disappeared—but not before she had revealed herself—who she was. Oh, I know it was her—she called me daughter—and her face, Daddy—you should have seen it—it was so beautiful—whatever may have happened—she is happy now. And, Daddy—I am just going ahead a little—and—and when you come—I—I'll be there to show you the way."

The next day Maisie sent for the doctor and questioned him closely. His answer left no room for doubt.

An hour later the Pilot dropped into the ward. Maisie made it clear that she wished to speak with him alone. The nurse drew up a screen.

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"My dear—dear friend," she began. His face lighted up. It was the first time she had addressed him like that. He began to hope.

"The doctor has just told me the truth," she told him. "I made him—I wanted to know—certain—without a doubt. It is as I felt. I am going to leave you—leave you all. And it so happens that now that I am going there is something I can tell you that I would not have been able to tell you if I had remained. Bend—bend lower, please. Yes, like that."

She hesitated, gasped for breath, made an effort and went on.

"You have been very—very kind to me—kinder than you know. And when you told me what you did tell me—how that you wanted me to be with you always—my heart responded, but there was something within lying cold and dead.

"I loved you, but I knew that it would not do. Some day when I am gone Daddy will tell you all about it—I will tell him that he may. But let me say just this—that it is not often that when life takes from me what it did take, and makes of me what it did make—it is not always that it gives so much back. I found two friends—and then later—Daddy and you. Oh, I guess they won't let us have a minute longer. Yes,

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you may kiss me, dear boy—yes, just once—and always remember that I loved you—loved you.”

He wanted to talk longer, but the nurse was at the screen, warning him.

He bent over her, kissed her on the lips, turned away, and hurriedly left the room.

The next morning they gathered around her. It was apparent that the end was not far off. The Shepherd was by the bedside, weeping softly, his face buried in the counterpane. He was not reconciled. The good things of life had come only to be taken away.

“Don’t—don’t—Daddy, dear,” she told him. “I wish that I could stay, but I can’t—really I can’t. I couldn’t fight any more. And there has been so much given to make it bright and beautiful—just think of this last year. I shudder to think of how that I was so near ending it all in that black, dark month. Why, my heart was full of hate then—and now—why, I love—I love—everybody now.”

She was sinking fast. The end was not far off. The young Pilot came around on the other side, pressed her hand, and bade her a last farewell.

They went away then—all but the Shepherd. A half-hour later they returned to find that nothing but the body was left—the spirit had flown. The Shepherd was kneeling by the bed—weeping softly.

MAISIE GRAY'S FAREWELL

That afternoon he went out into the hills alone, fighting it out, and trying to find peace. It was near morning when he made his way back to the Pilot's cabin. There was a look of triumph on his face. A second time he had fought his fight and won his victory.

He insisted on taking the remains back with him to sleep for ever beneath the pines. There was no one to say him nay.

The day of the funeral was one long to be remembered. The miners and townspeople turned out in force. There was a short service at the little mountain church, but only a small portion of the crowd could get in. The young Pilot gave a brief talk, but it was plain to be seen that he was not himself.

The crowd followed the black-plumed hearse to the station. The train was late, and by special request the casket was opened as it lay on the platform. One by one the men of the hills filed past, taking a last look at the features of the brave girl who had given her life for theirs. And so it happened that Maisie was honoured more in her death than she had ever been in her life.

There came a time when the young Pilot and the Shepherd were left alone beside the bier.

The Shepherd was dry-eyed and calm.

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During that night vigil he had fought his fight and won his victory. But not so with the young Pilot. He was suffering keenly. During his short life—he was so very young—life had given him many of her joys and few of her sorrows. He had not been disciplined to bear the thrust of a bolt like this.

He had cared so very much. As he had worked by her side during those long, weary days and nights when the plague was taking its toll his labour had been lightened by her smile. He had found a deep satisfaction in thinking that it might always be so—that always they might work together to stem back the tide of the world's sin and suffering. And then had come the days of mystery when she had denied herself to his advances—and now this!

She was going. In a few minutes she would be gone. Never again would he see that fair face. Never again those lips with their trick of smiling. The train was whistling. In another minute the casket would be closed up for ever. Ah, just one more glance—one long, last look!

The undertaker, a man of experience, saw that this would not do. He took him by the arm and led him gently to one side. The Pilot made an effort at control, but in spite of it a groan escaped him. A tear rolled out on his

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cheek. The miners noted his suffering and respected it. In their eyes the kid Pilot was white.

It was a little Cornishman who broke the tension. Slowly and softly he began to sing those famous lines of Van De Venter :

“ Over the river faces I see,
Fair as the morning, waiting for me ;
Free from their sorrow, grief and despair,
Waiting and watching, patiently there.”

When it came to the chorus the majority of the little group joined in :

“ Looking this way, yes, looking this way,
Loved ones are waiting, looking this way,
Fair as the morning, bright as the day,
Dear ones in glory, looking this way.”

When the last verse was finished nearly all were singing the song that was to recall the young Pilot to himself.

It was just the note he needed. The melody wafted out on the autumn air and brought the young man peace. A few friends came up to him and shook his hand. He straightened and faced them bravely. The song had formed a link between what had passed and what might lie beyond. And out of the experiences of that day he weaved new thoughts. He threw away a sermon labelled “Immortality,” and put a new one in its place.

The train rolled in. The casket was put

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aboard, and the crowd gathered around the Shepherd, trying to say farewell, and often failing, offering sympathy, and striving to press his hand. The conductor called, "All aboard." The Shepherd was slow in moving, then caught the step of the last car. A choir began to sing, "God be with you till we meet again." The refrain was taken up by all. Slowly, very slowly, the train began to move out. The Shepherd stood at the rear of the last coach, tremendously moved by the scene and the many evidences of goodwill and sympathy. He tried to call out a last "Good-bye," but his voice—husky as it was—would not carry. A wave of feeling swept over the group on the platform—none of them were ever to forget that day while they lived. The men kept themselves fairly well under control, but among the women there was hardly a dry eye or a cheek that was not damp. Everywhere handkerchiefs were raised and waved until the train passed around the curve—and on—and out of sight.

Two weeks later the Pilot, the Shepherd and the Prodigal stood around a fresh mound of earth beneath the pines. Godfrey seemed to sense that this might be a time when he was not wanted and turned away a few paces. His intuition was not wrong.

MAISIE GRAY'S FAREWELL

The Shepherd turned to his companion and told him the story that the one who had passed over had bade him tell. Long before the story was finished the tears were rolling down the young man's cheeks. He understood now; it was all clear. And in his heart there was rebellion—righteous anger—anger that it had to be.

They were about to turn away—the Shepherd to go back to his lonely life; and the young man to return to his task of interpreting the God of the skies to the miners of the hills.

Once more the young man glanced at the rude inscription on the wooden slab, that was to be replaced later by a shaft of granite decorated in letters of gilt.

This is what he saw. Below the name was the age—she was hardly twenty-one. The year followed—October 21st, 1897. Underneath were these words:

“O Death, where is thy sting?
O Grave, where is thy victory?”

“How true!” he repeated softly. “Life crushed her and threw her down, but she conquered after all. They broke her spirit, embittered her life, but they could not destroy her soul.”

CHAPTER XXXII

EULA PAYS A VISIT TO THE CROSSING

IT was a bright May morning in the following spring. A great crowd was gathering in the old court-house at Boundary Crossing. They began to arrive shortly after nine o'clock. At a quarter to ten the seats were filled and standing-room was at a premium. A veiled woman was seated in the front row of the gallery. Beside her was Bruce Jimmy, with his wife and Lelia.

For three days an important damage suit had been in hearing before a Supreme Court judge and a special jury. In a terrible accident at one of the Amalgamated properties the previous winter, nine lives had been snuffed out in an instant. Seven of the deceased bread-winners had left families behind, and their widows were suing for damages. The evidence was all in.

On this particular morning Godfrey Emmett, counsel for the plaintiffs, was to make his address

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to the jury. The judge was somewhat late, but promptly at ten o'clock the jury filed into their places. A door at the side opened and Godfrey walked in. There was a craning of necks. The word passed from lip to lip.

"Yes, that's him," whispered one miner to his fellow. "Don't look just like a lawyer, does he? He's not hard enough. But just wait until he gets talking. I'll bet some of those jurymen will be fishing for a handkerchief before he is through."

The veiled woman overheard, and her heart beat a little more quickly. She wished that he would look up. And if he did? But he did not look up.

The judge came in, the case was called, and Godfrey rose. He was very pale. A great deal might depend on what he would say in the next hour. To win meant that seven families would be saved from want—that seven helpless widows would not find themselves pushed out into the gaunt world of toil and care, alone and friendless. And he was not unmindful that it might mean more than that. He was fighting for recognition. The Manson case was not yet settled, although he was expecting a cable from his London agents at any moment. If he were to win both? But it was almost too much to hope.

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In his address he impressed upon the jury that they had been chosen to put a price, a value, upon the only priceless thing in the world—a human life. What had been lost could never be replaced. At best there would be nothing but a modest recompense. Money might clothe the child, buy food for the hungry mouths, but it could go no further. There would always be the empty chair at the fireside—the vacant place at the hearth.

But this great corporation, with its enormous wealth, had failed to agree to make even the smallest contribution. And their crime in failing to timber an unprotected tunnel had been fully proved. Foreman after foreman had demanded the necessary timbering, only to have their reports pigeon-holed and their opinions ignored. The management had thought only of making a record for themselves in the first place; and in the second place, of earning greater profits—more dividends for the owner of engraved paper in the land beyond the ridges.

At length he weighed and reviewed the evidence of witness after witness, piling proof on proof. And after an hour and a quarter of this method he once more reverted to the human side.

Among the fatherless ones left behind was

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a winsome little lad of three—beloved among the miners, and a typical father's boy. Continually he was talking about his daddy. At a signal the mother lifted him over the rail and gave him into the lawyer's charge. He lifted him up on to a table before the jury box.

In the gallery the miner who had spoken before broke out again :

"Now, watch him," he whispered. "He's been tame so far. Now—see—there—he's off."

The home was pictured as it had been—the cottage in the canyon : the sunshine of the little brood around the fireside : the baby laughter and chatter : the counting of hours until the return of the father : the eager watching of the chimney clock ; and then—the hour past—no familiar step on the walk : the watchful waiting : the terrible fear that is never really absent in a miner's home ; and last of all the visit of the committee—the dire news—the hour when joy died upon the threshold.

Amid the picture Godfrey paused a moment. And as he paused there was a development not set out upon the programme.

Wondering what it all meant, the sweet little lad looked at Godfrey and then at his mother. He seemed to understand that an appeal was being made, and for him. Then surely it

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could be for just one thing—the one thing that had never been out of his mind since that dark, black day when daddy—his great pal—had gone without returning. He uttered just one sentence. The tone was silvery clear.

“Mister—Mister Man—I’m so lonely without daddy—nobody carries me on his shoulder any more—are—are ye goone send him back?”

The appeal got over. The judge found there was something the matter with him, and looked out of the window. It would never do to allow the court to see that his eyes were misty.

Godfrey closed with a few brief words, seeing that this was a very good place to stop.

And the veiled woman in the gallery could hardly see the young attorney through her tears.

After the jury had filed out Godfrey returned to his office. He found a visitor waiting for him, none other than a representative of his old firm. They wanted him to come back and accept a partnership. But he was firm in his decision that he could not leave the Crossing now—not yet.

During the afternoon the jury gave the court their verdict. A total of almost fifty thousand dollars was awarded to the seven families, or an average of more than seven thousand dollars

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each. And later in the afternoon he received a cable to the effect that in *Manson v. the Amalgamated* the Privy Council had sustained the decision of the full court. Here were two notable victories in one eventful day.

And the day—it was not over yet.

With feelings not wholly mastered he saddled his pony and rode out into the hills. On the brow of the first rise above the Crossing he drew rein and the pony halted. This was the spot where he had met Bruce Jimmy on that first day, and the prospector had hurled his anathemas at the Crossing. Somehow the years seemed to have borne the prospector out.

Pushing on in his mad career Pete Turpin had met a horrible end. Dick, with the siren Blanche to aid him, was following in his footsteps, the courtesan completing the ruin she had begun. As for Maylor, the hand of the Gold God had gripped him, robbing him of his manhood, making him the tool of the ring, and finally turning him into a gambler and a cheat. And with him another was suffering—had suffered. The breaking up of the harmony of their life had broken Annie Maylor's heart. Back into the homeland she had gone—a lone, mournful and pathetic figure. And there were many others of whom there was little left now

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but the tragedy, the seams and blotches on the faces of some telling of much, and the overgrown mounds in a dozen cemetery plots telling of more.

Stern effort was the price of survival. To the winner the Spoils!—the Battle to the Strong.

He did not halt again until he reached Pine Ridge. It brought back very tender memories. It was here in the garden she had plucked that first rose for his button-hole. But he must push on. The deserted home made him melancholy.

He rode on past the little cemetery where they had laid Maisie Gray with the others; and where they had followed with the Shepherd a few short months before. Leaving this behind, he climbed the hill which skirted the Sheep Ranch on the north. Here he found the spot where they had raced after that first wonderful day in the hills. He tied the pony, and even found the curved rock where they had sat side by side. That had been a great day—a wonderful day! But it was foolish to think about it. He had not heard of her lately. Perhaps she had forgotten. Other interests might have crowded the old memory out.

The Sheep Ranch below suggested other memories. There the Shepherd had pulled

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himself together, and had created a triumph out of a ruined life. And there also Maisie Gray had found the inspiration which had supported her in her battle with herself and the world that she had feared would not forget.

He turned around, and looked upward—long and silently. Above him was Green Ridge mountain—the spot where he had found strength to turn away from the Coward's Way to Peace.

For many minutes he stood there, musing, thinking, wondering. The moon rose, blinking through the trees. The pony whinnied. The animal call brought him back to earth. He walked back toward the Crossing slowly, leading the pony at his heel.

Just beyond Pine Ridge something passing along from tree to tree startled him. Then among the pines he discerned that it was the movement of a veiled figure. He came closer. Then he saw that near the old garden gate there was a pony tied to the fence.

Puzzled, he advanced slowly. The figure was coming toward him. It is not too soon to say that it was the veiled woman of the gallery. She had a light cloak about her. Then, without warning, she drew back the veil.

She came forward, extended her hand—the

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light in her eyes visible—even in the moonlight. He could hardly believe his eyes.

“Godfrey.”

“Eula.”

She leaned toward him—put her hand on his shoulder. In the next moment she was crushed in his arms. And the man of the glib tongue was all but speechless—could not find the right word.

“Lover—lover, dear,” she whispered. “Have you forgotten—aren’t you going to tell me—tell me all the things I came to hear?”

He whispered, pressed her to him. She gave a little cry, and was still. He bent lower. His words were simple, but she could offer no more complaint.

“I can’t understand,” he told her a little later. “I don’t—why, I didn’t know that you were here.”

“Of course not,” she told him. “I arrived last night—am stopping with Bruce Jimmy and his wife. And I was there this morning—wanted to give you a surprise—so hid behind this veil. That was a wonderful speech, and I wanted to clasp your hand—to congratulate you—and then I knew that I dare not—not there.”

They were moving down toward the Crossing. He was leading her pony beside his own, and on

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the narrow trail with but space enough for one they found room to walk side by side.

She noticed the new grave amid the pines, made him tell all about Maisie, and her triumphal passing out—about the Shepherd's last days. And then again—they sped onward.

"I couldn't wait any longer," she told him. "I knew your trouble—that you were too proud to come. Besides," she added, "I have had a good offer for the mine—I am getting so tired of the care of it—although Jimmy has proved an excellent manager. Anyhow, I have decided to sell."

At the clump of pines half way across the level plateau they stopped.

"It was here," he whispered, "that you found my secret. Do you remember?"

"Perfectly. It was then that I began to understand. And now it is all right. Ah, yes, I know it is. Everything is clear—they all say so—and even if they did not—one look at you this morning would have told me. I know that the past is past—that the future is all right now."

He was silent, unanswering. She pressed his arm, and they walked on.

"Oh, you don't need to tell me, for I know," she continued. "I hear it everywhere. The Shepherd wrote and told me, while Bruce Jimmy

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never tires of repeating it—the wonder of that winter on the mountain. I read a book the other day—it was called ‘The Mastery of Fate.’ And it seems to me that at last you are conqueror—that you are the Master of your Fate.”

* * * * *

At the top of the last hill above the Crossing they paused—a few fleeting moments. Away down below them was the Crossing, with its ebb and flow of wild, night life. He thought of those old days at the Good Fellows’ Inn.

He put his hand to his ear a moment, listening. The night was very calm and still. There were few sounds. She heard naught but the washing and rippling on the river. But he heard more—the sound of another voice—the old enemy amid the darkness and gloom of the wild revelry of that midnight in the mountain town.

On a rock, slightly raised, she stood above him. She leaned over—pillowed his head against her breast.

“Just to think,” she whispered, “that I allowed you to fight it out alone—all alone. But never more—no, never more.”

EPILOGUE

OUT of the great world beyond the ridges there are two people whom we have known who come to the mountain country every year. One makes his abode at the Sheep Ranch (he is the owner now), while the other sojourns at Pine Ridge. The latter has a bright face beside him, but the other is always solitary—alone.

But a moment. We are in error. We have known the owner of the bright face. And so the total is three.

In the one it is not hard for us to recognize the young Pilot. As we approach him we see that he is stooping over a violet-laden mound, his form bent over, as though he were carrying a load. It is clear that he will never forget.

But we must not misunderstand. There are evidences of the undying light—the eternal fire. And somewhere in the realm of the spirit he is

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in commune with that other spirit—that bright spirit of the days of long ago.

For two months of each year he is a visitor in the mountain country. Day by day he rambles through woodland and forest glen, drinking in deep draughts of the mountain air, renewing his strength for the shock of the city battle, regaining the stamina—the life force that ten months of labour in the crowded districts of a metropolis take from him ounce by ounce and drop by drop.

And back to this centre let us follow him.

A new scene—a Sunday evening scene. In this great city—one of the greatest of the middle west—the crowd seems to be going but in one direction. At a corner they turn and pour through the doors of a down-town church—an institutional, undenominational Free Church. Within a quarter of an hour all seats are filled and the late-comers stand in the aisle. Before the hour the ushers are obliged to close the door in the faces of the tardy ones, whom, very reluctantly, they are obliged to turn away.

On a platform without a pulpit sits the young Pilot. Serene, quiet, he faces the multitude, reserving his strength for the time when he belches forth like a flame of living fire. In the first row of the gallery there is one who watches him closely, a veteran newspaper man, whose

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church-going habits are of recent birth. He knows it is because of the Pilot, but still wonders why he—this slim, quiet young fellow—attracts and holds him—and the rest. Night after night he has been trying to analyse—to reach the solution. And as he sits in the gallery now he is wrapped in a mantle of the same thought.

An hour later the orator is straining his forces for the final climax. The message has got over. Many of the great audience are bent forward slightly, eager to catch every syllable—the final word. Here and there a tear falls. For the Pilot is telling an incident—a story—the story. . . .

After the church is cleared the veteran journalist remains. Every Monday morning his readers get an extensive digest of the sermon, and a friendship has sprung up between him and the preacher. Just now he anticipates an invitation to the manse study.

And while he stands there waiting the thing breaks in upon him. He sees it as he has never seen it before. He whispers it—half aloud.

“Yes, I have it—the secret. It is because he loves them—loves us all. And with it—he has a most marvellous knowledge of life. Must have suffered some time—yes, must have suffered.”

And still he determines to put the question.

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The fire crackles in the grate. The lights are turned low and the light is mellow. The question has been asked, but there has been no reply.

The young man hesitates, rises, moves forward a few paces, and hesitates again. Finally he beckons to his friend and leads him over to the mantel.

Upon that mantel-shelf there are four pictures. The first is a little wooden church in the mountain country. It has a background of miners' shacks and homes and in the distance there are smoky mine buildings—the typical outlook in a mining camp town. The second is a flower-laden cemetery plot amid the towering pines. The third is a Shepherd with his flock. In his arms there is a little ewe lamb. And the camera has succeeded in catching that characteristic look—that gazing afar—as though he were looking into the further distance—yes, off into the Beyond. And the fourth. . . .

The visitor looks longer at this picture. It is that of a comely young woman in a nurse's apron and cap. There is something unusual about the face—a memory that is not easily forgotten. For about the features there is a wistfulness—a pained, hunted look—a look as though she were seeking for something she was never on earth to find.

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The visitor waits, expecting some word—an explanation. But the young Pilot is silent. The thing was too sacred. He had told a little—an incident that evening; further than that he could not go. The story—the whole story he could not tell.

* * * * *

For a good many years the Shepherd has been lying beneath the pines, resting peacefully amid the well-loved scenes.

The railroad has parlour-cars and pullman now, but the stage is making a special trip. And once more on a hot June day it swings around the curves leading from the spot where once there stood the road-house of Arizona John. The objective point is the Crossing.

In front of the Boundary Hotel there is a group of old-timers. Among them we notice Bruce Jimmy, carrying his years lightly. Prosperity has painted him with a soft brush. By his side is Lelia, now a handsome young miss of fifteen. Incidentally, she worships her daddy, and goes with him everywhere, school hours permitting. At a turn in the road the stage comes into view.

The group in front of the hotel are puzzled. There is a lady handling the lines in a most skilful

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fashion, and they wonder who it can be. Beside her is a gentleman who appears to be taking a deep interest in her achievement.

When the stage is within a dozen yards a quiver runs through the crowd. O'Brien breaks out with an exclamation.

"By gar—don't you—don't you see? Why, it's—it's Eula Lor—oh, confound!—I always forget the new name. But it's her—funny we didn't think about it. Nobody else could have done it—nobody else."

And as the stage stops and the passengers begin to alight the visitors are greeted with three hearty cheers. Mr. and Mrs. Emmett have arrived on their annual visit to the mountains. For a brief six weeks they are leaving behind the world beyond the ridges.

Amid the greetings which follow someone blunders. They make a comparison between this day and that other. And the suggestion and the inference are enough to send Lelia home with fear and wonder in her heart.

That night the Emmetts have dinner with Bruce Jimmy and his wife. It is a merry company, but all through the dinner Lelia is strangely quiet and silent. And afterwards she slips off to bed without the usual good-night. Her heart is full. A strange question—such a strange

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question—is quivering on her lips. And once under the covers she cries herself to sleep.

The next day the whole party ride up to Pine Ridge. But Lelia fails to share their enjoyment. She cannot forget that chance remark—that allusion to herself. In the late afternoon they leave the Emmetts at the Ridge and that night, when they are alone once more, she crawls up on the lap of the father of many years, and puts the strange question.

At first Bruce Jimmy is a little startled. All along he has known that this would come some day. All along he has known that there would come a time when he would have to disillusionize this wonderful young girl, who comes and sits on his lap, kisses his cheek, and throws her arms around his neck. He loves his other children, as a true father should, but he has a peculiar affection for Lelia—his first.

Quietly, tenderly, he tells her the story. But not all the story—there are parts that he will never tell. Softening it as best he can, he narrates the tale of the runaway—that wild day when the stage raced down the mountain. And also of that wilder and sadder night when—ah, this part is hard to tell.

And although he softens the tale and leaves out parts here and there, Lelia is moved greatly.

THE PRODIGAL OF THE HILLS

She breaks down—the tears come, followed by great, choking sobs. Her emotion beyond control, she finally shuffles out of his arms and rushes down to the pasture lot, where her pony comes galloping at her soft call.

She mounts in a moment and lets the pony scamper down to the edge of the rock bluff. She alights and stands there, over-looking the Crossing, her arms around the pony's neck.

At first her grief remains uncontrollable. The pain is too violent, the wound too recent, the probe too deep. Oh, it is cruel—cruel! And her real parents sleep away down there—oh!—oh!

But gradually the first spasm of grief passes. Thought forces calmness. She looks on the other side. She is reminded of the love and sacrifice back of the delight of all those happy and care-free years.

She thinks of her friends, the boys—the men of the hills—who love her with such a rare affection—Old Sandy, O'Brien, Murphy—and all. She goes further back—thinks of the night—visualizes that group in the hotel lobby, when Bruce Jimmy appeared with the baby girl in his arms.

And gradually the spirit of the land—the great

EPILOGUE

heart of the hill-country—conquers. They have given her of their best—they have loved her for herself. Life can never be quite the same again since she knows that her real parents sleep down there by the river. There will always be an ache—an ache that will never quite be gone. But life can still be a very beautiful and wonderful thing. A new resolve to be more to those who have taken the vacant place leaps up in her girlish heart.

The night wind whistles through the tree-tops. The pony bends over, rubs his soft nose against her cheek. In the town below the lights flicker—not so many now—for the ring is broken—the wild days are over, and the Crossing has fallen upon quiet times. A tired feeling comes over her and she thinks of the home on the ridge above where love and good cheer await her. It comes to her suddenly, like a great shaft of light appearing, that she is one of the favoured of the world.

She mounts and once more surveys the landscape, her eyes bright and her heart full. She expresses herself in a single sentence.

“Oh, I love it—I love it all!” she whispers.

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THE PRODIGAL OF THE HILLS

In the old home at Pine Ridge the two visitors who will be lovers to the end have risen early to welcome the sun as it flashes over the brim of the eastern ridge. The dew lies on the grass and the whole world glistens in the early morning glow.

The rays of sunlight flash into the little parlour, lighting up the picture which seems to make living at the Ridge natural and like the old days. Fascinated, Eula gazes at it long and earnestly, her husband's arm around her.

"I wonder," she whispers softly, "if she knows how it is with us—how happy we are? She seems to be smiling."

THE END

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The prodigal of the hills

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